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BUDDHISM IN SOUTH AFRICA
FROM TEXTUAL IMAGINATION TO CONTEXTUAL
INNOVATION

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for icrsa

Abstract

This thesis provides the first narrative of a history of Buddhism in South Africa. In the absence of any coherent analysis, it thus seeks to expose an historical lacuna in the study of religions in the region and to redress an academic aphasia that appears preeminent in recent "authoritative" pronouncements. It suggests, in fact, that Buddhism was both present in the histories of religious pluralism and pervasive among the contours of a geography of religious diversity in South Africa since at least the 1680s.

In so doing, the thesis further attempts to make the apparent "strangeness" of Buddhism in South Africa appear more familiar, and the familiar, quotidian history of religions in the region appear unconventional or exceptional. Consequently, the thesis also asks how the presence of Buddhism outside of a "normative" Asian origin can help to redefine the meaning of Buddhism and how the presence of Buddhism in South Africa can help to refine the meaning of religion.

However, in drawing on published materials, travelogues, archives, correspondence, interviews, and fieldwork, the primary assertion of the thesis is one that traces how, in that history, Buddhism was initially inscribed according to a textual imagination that was conditioned by articles and artifacts, and how that tradition was subsequently reinvented in the context of innovative, localized practice to create a living religion in the region.

In Part One, therefore, the thesis suggests that, although largely erased in the infrequent instances of its essentially theological reproduction or interpretation, Buddhism was present in a South African history of religious texts and objects. Indeed, it suggests that, although Buddhism was denominated as absurd or aberrant, South Africa became a pivotal nexus for ritualized and recurring exchanges and debates that produced these texts about Buddhism. Far from being a maritime margin, the Cape of Good Hope, because of its geographical position, became a seminal focal point for encounters and convergences between Europe and Asia and a metropolitan center essential to an imaginative inquiry that struggled to represent the religious and cultural difference of Buddhists.

That imaginative inquiry, nonetheless, inscribed Buddhism according to a textualized interpretation. In probing that interpretation, in Chapter One, I journey with seventeenth-century South African travellers to Ceylon, Siam, China, and Japan, so as to uncover moments in a narrative of this imaginative and romantic invention of Buddhism. I conclude by outlining the morphologies and genealogies of comparison that interpreted Buddhism for South African readers.

In Chapter Two, however, I uncover moments in which, contemporaneously with its European discovery and translation, Buddhism was reified in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century index of its textual imagination in South Africa journals. Classifying the tradition and establishing an inventory of its central tenets according to the canon of scholarly conventions implicit to the work of orientalists, philologists, collectors, and students of comparative religion, I note that an academic discourse developed in South Africa. Buddhism was even thought to have originated in Africa.

In Chapter Three, moreover, I suggest that these persistent "academic" discourses pertaining to discovery and translation, whereby Buddhism was first collected and then controlled in a textual inventory of similitude and difference, prefigured the ways in which Buddhism was subsequently appropriated by South African nonconformists in nineteenth and early twentieth-century religious debate.

Examining in detail the writings of South African Unitarians, Spiritualists, and Theosophists, I analyze how these Protestant appropriations reinscribed Buddhism within the confines of a Victorian social acceptability. But I also assess how that inquiry and interest led to Buddhism being feared by South African missionaries, some of whom travelled to Asia to convert Buddhists.

In Part One, therefore, I review events that inscribed Buddhism, initially, within the ambit of a romantic imagination. I then recover moments in which Buddhism was subsequently interpreted in knowledgeable strategies of comparative analysis and observation that created a Buddhist identity that was intelligible to a European and African imagination. And finally, I examine instances in which Buddhism was appropriated in localized forms of nonconformist inquiry.

Rather than rely solely on these earlier textual conventions for interpreting the meaning of Buddhism, in Part Two I initiate a review central to the anthropology of Buddhism: I assess how the meaning of Buddhism can best be viewed as a contextual and localized innovation. Consequently, in Chapter Four, I explore ways in which immigrant South African Indian and Chinese Buddhists began to reshape the meaning of Buddhism in the context of their marginalized position in the South African labour economy in the late nineteenth century. I also uncover moments, in Chapter Five, of the recent development of Tibetan and Nichiren Buddhism in South Africa. And explore, in Chapter Six, ways in which South Africans altered perceptions of the meaning of Buddhism because of localized, contextual experiences of Theravadin and Zen practice.

Throughout this narrative history, however, I continue to assert that Buddhism in South Africa can redefine an understanding of the history of religions in this region and reconstruct the meaning of Buddhism beyond Asia.

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Preface

To these well-loved parts belongs the *Dhammapada*.
(Jacobus S. Krüger, Pretoria, Transvaal, 1991).¹

To recover moments in a narrative history of Buddhism in South Africa is, in many respects, to scrutinize the scandalous. It is, in the words of anthropologist James A. Boon, to flirt with the forbidden; to dally in deviance; to explore licentiousness at the margin of human meaning. It is to write of *transgression*. For situated on the periphery of the contours of what counts as religion in this country, Buddhism, along with other minority religious traditions, is obscured or erased. Creating a consequent and illusory religious center, infrequent instances of the production of Buddhism are denominated in terms of the aberrant or anomalous.²

One could begin a document of this uncommon reproduction, this reprobation of Buddhism, with some recent "authoritative" pronouncements. The writings of an Hungarian-born Egyptologist (and Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika Sunday-school superintendent in Krugersdorp) are instructive: Kalman Papp, who was responsible for the entry on Buddhism in the *Standard Encyclopaedia for Southern Africa*, contended in 1959, in a publication for the blind, that although Buddhism consisted of five hundred followers in South Africa, it was to be considered a *vreemde godsdiens binne ons landsgrense* (literally, a strange service to god within

our borders). Buddhists, both strange and foreign, did not belong within the borders of a South African Christian imagining of religion.³

This history of ellipsis, of impertinence, might also begin with a 1970 essay on religions of the world documented for the Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerk. A professor of Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria, Hendrik Alphonse Daniel du Toit, questioned whether Buddhism was a religion at all. God was not present in its "theology" and there was no mention of sin in its teachings. If Buddhism was a religion, Du Toit pointed out, it was clearly not an "ethnic" religion. Buddhism was a foreign disorder. Moreover, since Du Toit argued that Buddhism was a "degenerate" and "syncretistic" form of a once "heroic, rigoristic moralism," that religion was also an ethical adulteration of ethnographic order in South Africa.⁴

Framed in a similar, Christian comparative reflex of denial, and in cognate accusations of degeneracy, D. H. Steenberg's 1975 article on Zen Buddhism for the Instituut vir die Bevordering van Calvinisme at the University of Potchefstroom suggested that Buddhism, outside of its monastic, Asian context, was a contradiction. Indeed, non-Asian forms of Buddhist practice were to be considered irregular. Additionally, however, the Buddhist conception of Nirvana was deemed to be a soteriological "dooploopstraat (*cul de sac*)," insofar as Buddhism was characterized by a "theological horizontalism."⁵

More recently, in 1988, Kalman Papp's colleague, Dominee A. J. Van Staden, outlined a more sympathetic approach to the study of Buddhism. In nine successive volumes of *De Hervormde*, the official organ of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika, Van Staden examined the historical foundations of Buddhism in India and Sri Lanka, as well as the subsequent expansion of the tradition, after the Third Council of Moggaliputatissa, in 250 BCE, to Burma, Thailand, and Cambodia (in the form of the earlier Theravada School), and to Tibet, China, Korea, and

Japan (where Buddhism was subsequently transformed, firstly by Mahayana, and later by Vajrayana and Zen). The life of the historical Buddha, the Sakyan sage, Gautama, his subsequent meditation with two ascetic *sramanas*, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta, his enlightenment under the *bodhi*-tree, and the "*Messias-idee* (Messiah idea)" of the future Buddha, Maitreya, was also discussed. The contents of Gautama's first sermon, the *Dhammacakkapavattana-sutra*, was expounded: life is nonsatisfactory because of impermanence and consequent suffering (*dukkha*); the cause of nonsatisfactoriness (*samudaya*) lies within the individual; and, therefore, the cessation (*nirodha*) of nonsatisfactoriness can be worked out in accord with the path (*magga*) of eight interrelated and progressive moral elements. These eight elements, noted Van Staden, encompassed the correct effort and right mindfulness necessary for meditation, and the right views and intentions needed for compassion and wisdom.

Consonant with a theological reworking of Buddhist history and teaching, however, Van Staden, reminiscent of both Steenberg and Du Toit before him, asserted that a "gaping, unbreachable gulley" separated Christian theism from Buddhist "atheism." Although noting that to attain a "more precise judgement of Eastern religions" Christian believers should know the contents of those religions, the missiologist nevertheless asserted that:

Boeddhiste sal nooit die Christelik-nasionale Onderwysbeleid aanvaar nie; die Afrikanervolk sal hom nooit by die Boeddhistiese owerheidsbeskouing kan neerle nie, en die twee groupe sal nooit in dieselfde regering op alle terreine kan saamwerk nie (Buddhists will never accept Christian National Education; the Afrikaner volk will never accept Buddhist authority or attitudes, and the two groups will never be able to work together in the same administration in all areas).⁶

Dominee Van Staden's argument that dialogue and collaboration between Buddhists and Christians in South Africa will be problematic is not shared by all South African theologians. However, the theological presuppositions that inform his argument persist in this country.

Jannie du Preez, a professor of missiology in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Stellenbosch, for example, noted that the discussion between Buddhism and Christianity in South Africa would "stimulate further dialogue on the very urgent matter of salvation." However, Du Preez stressed that if dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism was to avoid the problems posed by "fundamentally different" ideologies, the position of Christian theology was to be privileged. Only when configured in a Christian idiom and reinscribed as confirmation of a Christian theology of salvation would Buddhists and Christians "draw nearer to each other." Reinforcing that argument, and erasing fundamental differences between Mahayana Buddhism and Christian soteriology, Du Preez argued further that:

in spite of the strong autosoteric character even of this [Mahayana] form of Buddhism, [Buddhists] have begun to realise that salvation is, in one way or another, completely dependent on the grace of God.⁷

Therefore, although Christian theologians began to show an interest in Buddhist philosophy in South Africa, inter-faith dialogue continued to privilege Christianity. Furthermore, the distinctiveness of Buddhism in conversation was often collapsed and its position made obscure or obsolete. Ironically, however, the South African reprobation of Buddhism in recent theological or "inter-faith" debate contrasts sharply with more ancient interpretations of Buddhism in Africa.

By at least the third century CE, for example, Buddhism was viewed by Greek philosophers and Christian theologians in Africa neither as an

absurd and degenerate philosophical perversion nor as a strange and foreign theological disorder. Rather, Buddhism was perceived in Africa as the origin of Greek philosophy and the foundation of Christian theology. Drawing on Megasthenes' eye-witness account of Asian religions published in the *Indika*, for example, the Neo-Platonist thinker Plotinus, who lived in the cultural and commercial center of Alexandria, in North Africa, viewed Asian Buddhism as an original aspect of Greek civilization. Far from Buddhism appearing as a marginal, "barbarian" religion, Plotinus considered the wandering, ascetic *sramana* of India to be pioneering figures central to the development of Greek philosophy.⁸

Later, the Christian Church Father Clement of Alexandria wrote from the same African city suggesting that Indian *sramana* obeyed the precepts of the founder of the religion of Buddhism, Gautama the "Boutta [Buddha]." On account of his extraordinary sanctity, however, the ascetic "gymnosophists" raised Gautama to "divine honours." Indian ascetics, the Alexandrian Christian asserted in his *Stromata*, were thus the first philosophers. However, Clement's disciple Origen, somewhat spuriously, argued that Asian Buddhists were not just the first philosophers: Asian Buddhists were the prime progenitors of Christianity in Europe. In fact, wrote Origen, Britain in the third century was amenable to Christian concepts concerning the Trinity because the island "had long been disposed to [these concepts] through the doctrines of the Druids and the Buddhists, who had already inculcated the unity of Godhead."⁹

Perhaps the most sustained and persuasive image of Buddhism in Africa, however, appeared in the writings of another Alexandrian Christian on the continent, Basilides. The composer of a second-century gnostic collection called the *Exegetica*, Basilides argued that Christian doctrine was originated primarily from Buddhist philosophy. Christianity, Basilides suggested, was "Buddhist pure and simple - Buddhist in its governing ideas,

its psychology, and its metaphysics." Therefore, contradicting the South African missiologist Du Preez, who argued that Buddhist salvation was dependent on Christian theology, the North African theologian Basilides premised Christian teaching concerning salvation on Buddhist philosophy.¹⁰

In a review of the logic of these narratives we could argue that Du Preez was wrong. We could concur that Basilides was berserk. Whatever our assertions, however, we must admit that Africa was not a provincial margin in accounts of Asian Buddhism. Africa, from at least the third century, was in fact a metropolis central to the imagining of Buddhism.

While popular interpretations of Buddhism in South Africa avoided the various strategies of assimilation or devices of denial adopted by Christian theologians concerned with overcoming the disquietitude of debate, the repertoire of the prevailing press perpetuates perceptions of Buddhism as exotic and alien. The curiosity of disparate interest groups - from environmentalist organizations to women's rights lobbyists; from art historians and collectors to fashion and travel writers - causes Buddhism to be circumscribed within the hyperbole, the trope of *romance*. For example, when Sepp Anthofer (Oblate of Mary Immaculate) initiated a Zen meditation center overlooking the Hartbeespoort Dam near Pretoria in 1991, the *Sunday Times* wrote that the Catholic priest "had a Yen for Zen." A Theravada-oriented retreat center, founded at Ixopo in the Natal Drakensberg mountains twenty years earlier, was similarly accounted for. *Style Magazine* documented "How Buddha came to the Berg." Likewise, the *Weekly Mail* encouraged South Africans to visit Ixopo to "Discover Buddha in the Bush." In a review of a popular demonology, *Satanism: The Seduction of South Africa's Youth*, the same publication advised readers to "Beware the Buddha on Your Mantelpiece."¹¹

Buddhism was consumerized as romantic and demonized as alien in other respects. When a South African criminology professor established a

Tibetan Buddhist retreat in Nieu Bethesda in 1981, the parallel deviance of "Nirvana in the Karoo," did not escape inquiry. The deserted "Karoo town [was] humming to Buddhist chants" noted the *Eastern Province Herald*. In fact, and in terms consistent with a confusion that subtly confounded Buddhism with an anti-Islamic sentiment, that town became the "*Mecca* of Buddhism."¹²

The impulse to locate Buddhism as an exotic and distant Asian deviance, thereby denying subjectivity to Buddhists, is predicated on the need to confront the intractability of what appears to be a transgression of Christian order. However, faced with the continued omnipresent perversity of the exotic - in the Transvaal, in Natal, and in the Cape Karoo - accounts of this inescapable Buddhist presence exist not only in South African *representation*. The history of Buddhism in South Africa appears also in statistical *documentation*. Therefore, since both Christian theologians and inquiring commentators in the popular press found it increasingly arduous to provide order to an expanding Buddhist "disorder," statisticians sought to resolve the difficulties of narrative description by resorting to taxonomic nomenclature. That transition - from representation to documentation, from narrative to nomenclature - reached apotheosis in the encyclopaedia of stasis, the census.¹³

Obtained under ritual conditions, once every decade, the census provides the single, most standardized, authoritative compendium of the history of Buddhism in South Africa. It provides, in fact, the only history of Buddhism in South Africa - from 1911, when 436 Buddhists were enumerated, up until 1991, when 2 391 people signalled a Buddhist presence in this country. The static text of census is an historical survey, a canonically scrupulous surveillance, however, that reveals what Michel Foucault calls "panoptic" truth. That truth is produced, not only through the gaze of taxonomic order, but also through a regime of exclusion. The census is a

statistical anti-narrative, a technology of power ironically making the visible, albeit unimaginable, invisible. The statistics tabulate the "legitimate" truth of Buddhism in South Africa through the sequential oppositions of race (European, Asian, or African), language (English, Afrikaans, or any one of eleven African vernacular languages), sex, marital status, age, and even magisterial district, so that a "European," "Afrikaans-speaking," "Unmarried," "Female" Buddhist between "Forty and Forty-five" from the "Rural" Maraisburg magisterial district of Roodepoort in the Transvaal emerges in the 1911 and again in the 1926 census returns. But the census ignores the complexities of both biography and the Buddhist tradition. Whereas manifold Christian denominations are enumerated, for example, all Buddhists are displaced in a generic, categorical inventory of similitude.¹⁴

The history of Buddhism in South Africa, disclosed and frozen in the text of census, is also entangled in the rhetoric of race and in the idiom of theological classification. In the 1980 census returns, for example, "Asians" were defined in terms of Christian, Hindu, Muslim, or Buddhist. "Coloureds," by contrast, were enumerated as either Christian, or Muslim, or "Other non-Christian." Unlike "Europeans," however, "Coloureds" were neither Jewish nor Buddhist and, unlike "Asians," never Hindu, but always "Other non-Christian." This is confusing. It implies, however, that an *a priori* theological paradigm was imposed on the nature of religious affiliation. Christianity became the measure against which, varying according to racial classification, Buddhism and other religious minorities were tabulated as "Other."

What the census, as sacred canon, as selective, censured history, does reflect, however, is that since at least the year 1911 Buddhism occupied an unexpected niche in a South African demography of religions. It notes that the number of Buddhists have grown marginally to contribute to the history of religious pluralism in this place. And it remarks that in 1970 there were

some 1 407 Black "African Buddhists" in South Africa. Characteristically, the ethnic divisions indicative of census-taking in South Africa enumerated 594 Black Buddhists as Zulu-speaking; 384 as Xhosa; 28 as Swazi; 22 as South Ndebele; 8 as Ndebele; and 21 as "Other-speaking African Buddhists." There were, by the margin of one, therefore, more South Ndebele Buddhists than there were "Other African Buddhists." And by a similar difference, less "Other African Buddhists" than Venda Buddhists.

In an effort to transform this apparently accurate but clearly absurd account, and to pursue a history of "perversity" and playfulness instead of a sort of homogenizing paranoia, I propose to explore what Mircea Eliade suggests is a necessary alternative to the provincial worldview of the denial or exoticism of an "Other." I attempt, as historian of religion Jonathan Z. Smith argues all histories of religion must attempt, to confuse and invigorate the habitual histories of religion in southern Africa. And I undertake to make the anomalous - the uncelebrated and unfamiliar - quotidian, everyday, and commonplace. Thus situated on the cusp of religious history and the collision of cultural encounters with alterity, I follow the work of Gayatri Spivak and Sara Suleri in proposing a necessary confusion of the theoretical readings of duality - of center and margin; of Self and Other; of familiar and strange - in order to decenter the representations and classifications that tend to atrophy our sense of difference. I explore moments in a narrative history of Buddhism in South Africa.¹⁵

In the absence of that history, and aware of the exclusions complicit with attempts at closure, permanence, and fixture, I opt for a galloping, composite collage of disparate data, strange interludes, and unexpected, episodic juxtapositions. Bringing the footnotes of a history of religions in South Africa to the forefront of the text, I pull out some of the threads of a South African *sutra*. Rather than *foreclose* discussion, however, I proceed with a fragmented fabric of curious collections in order to *open* debate about

the meaning of Buddhism. Rather than displaying this material, as the census undertakes in the gaze of numerical documentation and, I will suggest, as both the travelogue and the museum collection advances in its taxonomic classification, I review (in the sense of a spectacle that delights in being seen instead of fearing exposure) some of the central and often surreal moments in this narrative.¹⁶

In Part One I explore attempts made by "spiritual cartographers" of religion in southern Africa - travellers and imposters; students of comparative religion and collectors of textual artifacts; and rationalists and romantics disenchanted with the hegemony of Christian discourse and practice - to come to terms with Asian alterity in what at first might appear as the *periphery* of Buddhist practice in the Cape.

However, situated at the geographic nexus of economic engagement, at least until the middle of the nineteenth century and the decline of the Dutch East India Company, which was exacerbated by the building of an inlet at Suez in 1859, the Cap de Bonne Esperance was a promontory that was simultaneously a *center* for ritualized and reciprocal exchange.

Rather than viewing the Cape colony as a geographic and maritime margin on the edge of a mercantile world, therefore, I pursue the argument that one might conceive of this place as a metropolis for reading of encounters, convergences, and contacts between Europe and Asia. In these encounters, negotiated initially by trade, the Cape of Good Hope became a seminal focal point rather than a liminal extremity in the transferral of knowledge about the peoples, habits, and religions of the Orient, especially Buddhism. That pivotal position inaugurated an abiding fear for what appeared strange, as well as a fascination for what was clearly "deviant." In descriptions and documentation, in illustration and iconography, Buddhism consequently became an enduring object of the South African imagination. Vacated of contextual meaning, and despatched solely within the inscription

of text, however, Buddhism was thought a bizarre perversion or inversion of (Protestant, Christian) truth. It was idol-worship or atheism. Empty of any article constituent of a belief in or service to gods (godsdiens), Buddhism was deemed not to be remotely religious.

In Chapter One I travel with the odd and the unusual in order to outline some of the familiar constructions of Buddhism in what I have called this perennial *romance* of its textual imagination. Instead of enhancing the preconditions necessary for understanding Buddhism, therefore, I exaggerate in this chapter the romantic preconceptions, inventions, and denials of the tradition that proliferated in the Cape in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I demonstrate the rhetorical strategies that produced for South African readers the "truth effects" by which a Buddhist Other was represented and delineated in travelogues and reports. To tabulate these preconceptions and representational strategies of descriptive detail, measurement, and structural opposition, I suggest, is essential to any recovery of a narrative history of Buddhism in South Africa, since they remain entrenched in accounts of Buddhist alterity and continue to condition South African assertions concerning the beliefs and practices of Buddhists.

Reflecting on the meaning of these strategies, as *salvage* rather than only as romance, I recount in Chapter Two the imaginative production of Buddhism by Orientalists, philologists, and scholars of comparative religion. In the second half of the chapter I also proceed to peer into the cabinets of Buddhist material culture at the Cape. I suggest that the capture and interpretation of objects themselves became textual representations although, following Gregory Schopen, I note also that nineteenth-century presuppositions prescribing an overriding textual orientation in Buddhist studies omitted to a large extent emerging epigraphic and archaeological archives. Concerned not so much with earlier strategies of denial or the bizarre *frisson* of unexpected similarity, the continued invention of Buddhism

in these nineteenth-century conventions, in these taxonomies, subsequently emphasized questions of degeneration and decline. The salvage and translation of texts and the display of artifacts, therefore, raised inquiries not only about the shape or morphology of the Buddhist religion, but about originality.¹⁷

Although some continuity can be seen in the strategies employed by travel writers to *represent* Buddhism, and those refined in the nineteenth century to *control* this information through the capture and interpretation of texts and in the collection and domestication of exotic objects - continuities, for example, in the delineation of true and false religions; in the comparison of Buddhism with more familiar forms of religious practice; and in explanations of this tradition that traced its genealogy - by the nineteenth century a new order of knowledge about the world of religious diversity subsumed Buddhism. South Africans were conversant with this emerging science of comparative religion, and some began to employ the discourse necessary to the discipline. Wild, undisciplined analogies, particularly those that drew associations between Africa and Asia, continued to proliferate. Nevertheless, attempts were made to advance "scientific" comparisons on the basis of language, textual analysis, systematic classification, and historical reconstruction, even though, as Peter Harrison documented, this objective, scientific knowledge was deployed to serve the varied interests of Christian polemicists and reinforce European cultural mores in an attempt to domesticate the exotic.¹⁸

South African imaginings of Buddhism in the nineteenth century were not, however, restricted to romantic representations in the narratives of travellers. Nor was Buddhism interpreted solely in relation to the salvage of reasonable, uncorruptible, and reified texts and artifacts that prefigured the emergence of a science of religion at the Cape. In Chapter Three I uncover some of the voices of nineteenth-century religious dissent that popularized

Buddhism in South Africa. These nonconformist voices brought Buddhism into dialogue with local expressions of religious practice in the latter half of the nineteenth century. I suggest, however, that the appeal of Buddhism to religious dissenters in South Africa, either for its seeming rationalism, or spiritualism, was a corollary of, and in continuity with, European Orientalist discourse. Whether they were Unitarians, Romantics, or Theosophists, most South Africans who found Buddhism appealing, in part because of its earlier exotic representation, or because of its "scientific" interpretation, sought refuge in Buddhism only insofar as that religion was deemed consonant with a Victorian social acceptability.

Having in the first half of this record recognized an obligation to the archive of textual manipulation, in Part Two I turn to a methodologically more responsive dialogue. In this way the organization of material corresponds in part to a narrative that reflects the processes of research, for I draw on an account of interviews and participant observation to focus on more recent moments in the history of Buddhism in South Africa. Attempting to bring the biographical process to the fore, I let South African Buddhists "speak for themselves," rather than allowing Buddhism to be circumscribed within the "orthodoxy" of earlier textual controls.

In Chapter Four, against the backdrop of a wider disquiet over Oriental "iniquity," and an increase in mercantile exchange at the end of the nineteenth century, I discuss moments in which Indian and Chinese South Africans attempted to reconstruct Buddhist practice within the confines of a marginalized economic and political context. In contrast to an earlier imagination and interpretation of Buddhism, based on the rehearsal of precepts consistent with textual representation, these communities began to explore ways in which the jewel of Buddhist *dharma* could evolve in a southern African context, a context mediated not by Victorian or Western social mores but primarily by social and political alienation. That context was

also a site of conflict. For example, when the construction of a multi-storey, multi-million-Rand Buddhist temple complex for Chinese Buddhists in Bronkhorstspuit, outside Pretoria, was proposed, one local respondent asserted, in opposition, that "having Buddha in our town would be like inviting the anti-Christ."¹⁹

As Buddhism emerged in South Africa as a viable, albeit vilified and even demonized alternative to more pervasive forms of religious practice, enriching the history of religions in this space, it brought with it a corresponding and complex diversity. In 1970, for example, a Theravadin-based Buddhist retreat was inaugurated at Ixopo, in the Natal Drakensberg, to further Vipassana meditation practice. At Nieu Bethesda, in the Sneeuberg, a "new house of prayer" was established in 1981 for Buddhists inclined towards Tibetan Tantra. And in Somerset West, under the Helderberge, a center was formed to focus on Korean Chogye Son (Zen) practice. In Chapters Five and Six I inflate what the census collapses, therefore, by documenting the narratives of these as well as other Buddhist traditions reflected in the fabric of a South African history of religions. I begin, in Chapter Five, to expose moments, for example, in which Tibetan Buddhism gradually emerged as an imported Asian, textually "correct" artifact, but also as an alternative religious order that was, some might argue, as South African a *sangha* as the sangoma, or traditional sacred specialist. Indeed, the acceptance of monastic vows by a South African Buddhist *bhikkhuni*; the emergence of an initiated teacher of Tibetan Vajrayana; and the meeting of Zulu-speaking, South African healers with Tibetan teachers, is indicative of this localized, contextual innovation.

These are indications of peculiarly South African forms of practice that are not restricted to Tibetan, or even Nichiren belief and ritual, which I outline in Chapter Five. Nor are they, as the diversity of Tibetan traditions - including Kagyudpa and Gelugpa schools - suggest, a sufficient indication of

the pluralism inherent within Buddhism in South Africa. Mirroring a methodological interest in contextual innovation, rather than in the monologues of textual imagining, the narrative in Chapter Six gives an account of some of the reasons for Theravadin and Zen Buddhist responses to the South African context. In that chapter I also explore how South African Buddhists draw on a variety of beliefs, rituals, myths, and symbols from within the wider Buddhist tradition to ameliorate situations of alienation. The various forms of Zen practice in South Africa are notable and include the Japanese Soto tradition of the Dojo Marisan Nariji in Johannesburg, that follows the teachings of the late Taisen Deshimaru-roshi and is attached to the Zen Association Internationale in Paris, of which writer and poet Breyten Breytenbach is a student; the Sanbo Kyodan (Fellowship of the Three Treasures) tradition, founded by Harada-roshi and Yasutani-roshi and reflected in the organization of a number of Cape and even Roman Catholic Christian practitioners; and the Korean Kwun Um style of Chogyo Son (Zen) that is advanced at Somerset West, Grahamstown, Colesburg, and Johannesburg.²⁰

By documenting moments in this history of Buddhist diversity I expose one aspect of religious pluralism in South Africa. I suggest that Buddhism is pervasive among the contours of a geography of religious diversity and present in the histories of religious pluralism in this country. In exposing moments in this narrative history of Buddhist variety, moreover, I argue that Buddhism was initially mediated according to the textual imagining of articles and artifacts, and, subsequently, innovated in the context of local practice. In pointing to the margins of discrepancy between textual "orthodoxy" and that contextual expression, however, I open up a broader theoretical consideration: the relationship, as defined by Richard Gombrich, between precept and practice, and more importantly, between meanings of contradiction that evolve at the nexus of this dialectic. Here I

am interested in what Bernard Faure, following Jonathan Z. Smith, calls the localized, or "locative" aspect of the tradition, rather than its unlocalized, "utopian" vision. In that innovative, locative idiom Buddhism is often accused of uncanonical heterodoxy. Such accusations, however, fail to admit that historically Buddhism was consistently reconstituted by local innovation. Faure illustrates this shifting, contextualized meaning in Asia, for example, where Buddhism was articulated in the idiom of local deities, often associated with snakes, or nagas, that were reappropriated to further the aims of Buddhist ideology. As I suggest in Chapter Five, the locative vision of the snake, which is particularly symbolic of traditional African religious practice, might similarly be perceived as idiomatic of the way in which Buddhism is viewed and articulated in localized Buddhist practice in South Africa.²¹

Traversing the contours of this visionary history, however, I provide a further foil to what is perhaps a more fundamental issue in the history of religion and, especially, in the anthropology of Buddhism. First, I ask how the presence of Buddhists in South Africa, outside of a "normative" Asian origin, recreates our understanding of the entire construct of Buddhism. And second, I inquire how the presence of Buddhists in this place alters our understanding of religion.

These concerns are, of course, not new. Ever since Emile Durkheim used Buddhism to counter Tylorian definitions of religion, the study of Buddhism provided a focus for fundamental questions in anthropological debate. Indeed, the quest for academic autonomy in the history of religions was constituted primarily on the basis of documentary sources from Asian peoples. Thus while Mircea Eliade began his review of the history of religions with Emile Durkheim, he was aware of the fact that the study of religion had its roots in Orientalism. That study, however, was an imaginative interpretation, a reproduction of the Orient, as Edward W. Said

and Raymond Schwab inform us, that was managed and made meaningful by the Occident. It was an Asian identity and intelligibility that was not the result of its own efforts, but rather a product of the complex series of knowledgeable manipulations by which it was created.²²

In examining the meaning of Buddhism, and in confusing the academic disciplines that invented it, I note that that religion, when conceived of in the illusory precision of monothetic or theistic categories, is profoundly problematic. However, when viewed as inchoate and polysemic, Buddhism can provide for the possibility, and the perversity, of liberating the history of religion from contested strategies of systematic exclusion or partial disclosure. In the epilogue, therefore, I seize the opportunity to continue the constitution, the imagination of Buddhism, by focussing on a history of Buddhist entanglement with the Law. In documenting that historical struggle, I assert that whilst the presence of Buddhism redefined the meaning of religion in South Africa, the meaning of Buddhism was again mediated by a persistent reliance on textual authority. That authority, I argue, is merely one *sutra*, only one possible vision of a localized history of Buddhism. It is an authority, nonetheless, that is dependent upon a Buddhist presence in the contours of a South African history of religions. That history suggests, moreover, that the position of Buddhism in South Africa might be more influential in the unfolding of Buddhism beyond Asia than merely as a postscript to what Stephen Batchelor called "the awakening of the West." That history suggests, in fact, that the *Dhammapada* does indeed belong to these parts.²³

Part One
Textual Imagination

To travel is often thought of as to displace, to disorient, to dislocate. Such a formulation, however, is inadequate. For to travel is also to yield order. This is true also of travel writing. Travel and travel writing reorganize diachrony and disorder into a synchronous structure of resemblance. Consequently, an encounter with the margin, the chaotic periphery of the world, for travellers and their readers alike, is a way to discover or define a center. As Mary B. Campbell and Michael T. Ryan have shown, travel evokes the marvelous in the far reaches of the writer's imagination while simultaneously revealing a familiar fantasy. To travel, therefore, is both to invent an Other and to reflect the Self.¹

The dialectical relationship that transpires in travel writing, between an aberrant, ambiguous "outside" and an "internalized" identity, is paradoxical. But that relationship is also essential. Dangerous, disorderly contagion is necessary to impede inertia. Perhaps that essential paradox is nowhere more present than in the imagination that prefigured European inventions of the Orient. In the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, for example, the Mediterranean world was fascinated with an Asia that was idiomatic of the monster. Persistent Plinian peoples - including Sciopods

(whose single foot was so large that it was used as a sunshade); Cynocephalia (whose bodies were constituted of human form and culminated in the head of a dog); and as an inversion of natural order, of physiological form, the one-eyed Cyclops, whose hair, white at youth, turned black at the age of thirty - mediated mediaeval accounts of marvelous entropy. The world, the *terra incognita*, as Rudolf Wittkower, Lorraine Daston, Margaret T. Hodgen, and David G. White have shown, was both incomprehensible and terrifying.²

By the late sixteenth century, however, European observers of Asia were heirs to a very different, if not equally disproportionate imagination. No longer based primarily on iconic references to the marvelous, or to the epistemic exoticisms of the biblical or classical Greek and Roman writers who invented them, European interpreters employed standards of comparison that were consistent with expanding missionary or mercantile endeavors. Imagination was mediated by Spanish and Portuguese, and later Dutch and British, encounters with Asian Otherness. The East thus acquired not only a symbolism insinuated in the marvels of mediaeval romance, but an ethnographic "validity" that appeared in the rhetoric of religious and commercial travel. Where once Asia was associated with the monstrous, it was now an *imago mundi*, an image of the world, however, that was as much the result of theological polemic and material exchange as it was an apotheosis of the imagination.³

As a corollary to this natural reciprocity, two related but seemingly contradictory impulses were advanced. First, Asia was dominated by a discourse of *difference*. Ceylon, Siam, China, and Japan, as part of an enigmatic, maritime margin, were all endorsed as depositories of Otherness. Indeed, as Pierre Bourdieu observed, that vision of the world was inescapably a "di-vision" of the world. Second, however, Asia was subjected to the *sameness* of colonial hegemony. As an embryonic moment in an evolutionary hierarchy, the East was persistently invented against an index of

European originality. The East was wrested of any ontological subjectivity. Consequently, an entire continent was first invented as an object of wild preconception, and then, as Edward W. Said argued, erased as part of a language of denial. As an object of European inquiry, Oriental peoples were depicted as devoid of historical subjectivity. The peoples of the Orient were presumed innocent, for example, of the laws of marriage and language. They evidenced the absence of any religious sentiment, or if they did have religion, that religion was considered to be an imitation of earlier mediaeval or Christian primordialities.⁴

Father Matteo Ricci, one of the earliest and most renowned of the Catholic missionaries to enter Asia, outlined some of the manifold resemblances that he advised existed between European Catholicism and the rituals and traditions adhered to by the followers of Fo (the Buddha) in China. So compelling were those resemblances, he contested, that Buddhist belief and practice was undoubtedly a "shadow of the Christian gospel." When Buddhist monks began to mock that gospel, genuflecting at the image of the Madonna and spreading the "rumour that the God whom we worshipped was a woman," however, Ricci conceded that those resemblances could inspire corruption. Therefore, he replaced the image of Mary with one of the Messiah. Conversely, the Chan (Zen) monk Taiji Jashuron thought that Christian, Catholic teaching was premised on Buddhist practice. Evidence for that assertion, he argued, could be found in the respective monastic exercises, including penance, the observance of celibacy, and the custom of alms-giving, that Christians inherited from Buddhists. Therefore, Buddhism was not the shadow of Christian primordality, but the origin of Christian belief and practice. In fact, argued the monk, "Jesus had secretly studied Buddhism" but failed to "penetrate its wondrous hidden depths." In part, therefore, the rumours that Buddhists promoted were not just the result of an inability to explain the mystery of the Incarnation, as Ricci suggested

they were when he replaced the Madonna with Christ. These rumours were the consequence of ritualized symbolic exchange.⁵

In that exchange, however, Asia was increasingly evacuated of any distinctiveness or subjectivity. The Orient increasingly became an object of European expansion. However, the constitution of the Orient was also an invention upon which the idea of a European continent was conditioned, both ontologically and economically. In the discourse of the marvelous; in the fanciful conceit of travelogue; and in the exchanges of missionaries and merchants, therefore, not only was the Orient constituted, but contingent on this creation, a European continent was configured - a European identity conceived as something more than what in reality was not much more than a Cape of Asia.

Emerging from the context of missionary and mercantile expansion, therefore, the *idée fixe* of a European signification of Asia became a reality. That fixed idea, however, was simultaneously a fundamental moment in the constitution of an Occidental identity, albeit a moment wherein Europe erased any recognition of reciprocity. Prospering alongside these European images of Asia, however, were possibilities for advancing an ethnographic "autopsy" of the Orient and its people. Indeed, the reports of missionaries and travellers from the Orient made necessary such comparative analyses of the anatomy, sexuality, and even dietary life of the wild and exotic Asian (as compared to the quotidian European). It was from the generalizations augured by these ensuing encounters that one specific discipline of human surveillance arose - the science of religion. The excavation of Oriental religions, including "Hinduism," "Buddhism," and "Confucianism," was in this sense part of a wider narrative of encounters with alterity and attempts to transcribe difference within an academic discipline.

Unlike earlier travelogues and descriptive reports, that tended only to exaggerate the bizarre and illustrate the perverse, ethnographically "valid"

accounts of Buddhism produced by these infant scientific discourses attempted also to interpret and classify information about Buddhism. Classificatory taxonomies, as the Italian novelist Italo Calvino revealed, thus constituted an attempt to reduce to a discrete and fixed system the vertigo or "intellectual agrophobia" that was the result of access to countless and uncontrollable information. Continuities between both discourses can be observed in the comparison of Buddhism with more familiar forms of religion, and the attempt to provide a reliable genealogy of its foundation. During the nineteenth century, however, objective comparisons based on these disciplines of language, textual analysis, and historical reconstruction meant that although Buddhism continued to attract and fascinate the European imagination, the fear of its rampant contextuality, that threatened to disturb internal theological order, was now fixed and controlled in the inventory of texts. Control over the meaning of Buddhism was thus conditioned, initially, by the capture and inventory of a textual archive.⁶

A second strategy for restraining and regulating Buddhist material, however, was advanced in the capture and interpretation of objects. Indeed, the transition from Buddhism as exotic to the possibility of a more domesticated presence in South Africa was not occasioned only through readings of its imagination or denial in the texts of travellers. Although, as Daniel Defert points out, travels were a way of collecting the world, the imagination of Buddhism in South Africa was marshalled also in the collation of artifact. Initially inflated in the textual canon of its European invention, Buddhism was subsequently collapsed and manipulated in the ordered confines of South African museums and material collections.⁷

Cabinets of Asian curiosities, the *mimento hominum* or *wunderkammern* of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, emerged contemporaneously with the age of a discovery and exploration of Buddhism. By the nineteenth century, however, museums also began to mobilize

expressions of otherness through the imposition of a more systematic classificatory terminology and taxonomic order that was consistent with the advances of scientific comparison. As arrangements of the spoils of conquest and expansion, museums thus resembled colonial omnipotence and reassembled a colonial world. Although they were clearly places of imagination, museums were also expressions of domination. In fact, the control of artifacts in museums was a form of guardianship, even rescue, insofar as one of the primary aims of the museum was to avert decay or extinction. As Benedict Anderson asserted, material collections were thus consumed in a sort of "necrological census."⁸

Sacred Buddhist "objects," as part of the artistic document of the Other, consequently functioned not as spiritual wealth, but as material capital; as "fetishist" commodities for a community that exercised power in the conversion of ritual subjects into objects of interest as art. South African museums were in this respect *loci* for the enthronement of merchandise. However, Asian Others, displayed *as* Other, were not only desacralized. The peoples and religious practices of Asia were frozen in the inertia of display, as they were in the inscription of text. However much Buddhism was a living religion, that religion was fixed and its subjectivity denied. As anthropologist Johannes Fabian observed, the exotic was perpetuated through the termination of time.⁹

Rather than the imaginative, descriptive inventions or denials of Buddhism that emerged consonant with the age of travel and travel writing that I document in Chapter One, therefore, in Chapter Two I consider how Buddhism was revealed, interpreted, and controlled in the strategies of textual invention. I argue that Buddhism was mediated by the artifice of textual canon. Indeed, Buddhism was invented in Europe and in Africa in nineteenth-century strategies of religious and linguistic comparison as a textually reified object of inquiry. That object of inquiry was subsequently

deployed to measure the apparent "disgrace" of uncanonical, contextual practice. I suggest, however, that Buddhism was not only imagined and salvaged as text. Buddhism was arrested as an object, as an artifact, and represented for inquiry and interpretation in the material conventions of the museum. Traversing moments in the relations between Africa and Asia, and across three centuries, therefore, I document how Buddhism was revealed in South Africa as, initially, a *romantic* invention of the imagination. Subsequently, and importantly, I analyse how Buddhism was fixed as the *salvage* of texts made feasible comparative reflexes that indexed categorical patterns of development or degeneration. And lastly, but briefly, I review how Buddhism became an arrested artifact that was open to inquiry, but frozen in displays that domesticated the exotic and reinforced European interests.

However, at least by the last decade of the nineteenth century, I suggest that Buddhism was for many South Africans more than merely an imaginative romance. Buddhism was more than solely a reified, textual object, salvaged and open to interpretation. Buddhism was an ontological reality. That religion was part of a meaningful *dialogue*, one that provided an alternative to Christian religious order. Comparable originally to an episteme of the exotic, or denied subjectivity as an infedilitous example of the pagan, Buddhism subsequently began to emerge as a doctrinally distinct (albeit confusing) tradition open to unrestricted inquiry. That inquiry occurred in South Africa in dialogue and in debate that was conducted in journals from Cape Town to Lovedale, and in languages that included English, Afrikaans, and Xhosa. Many South African writers continued to stress the negative aspects of Buddhism. That religion was a "sad and soulless system." Buddhism "favoured inaction" and its followers were either atheistic, materialistic, or nihilist. The religion of the Buddha, for some, was just very difficult to make out. The author of the African Bookman's *Religion in Many*

Lands, J. D. Mackin, for example, lamented that "it was hard to say whether the Buddhists believed in God or not, because the thing in which they believed was so different from the ordinary idea of god." In fact, Mackin confessed to his African readers, "the Buddhist religion was one of the hardest religions to understand."¹⁰

For other South African commentators, however, Buddhism was neither atrophied in textuality or made absurd because of its unintelligibility to European, or African Christian sensibilities. Buddhism was not just something to be discussed or debated. Buddhism was becoming something to be defended. Indeed, because Buddhism emerged at a time of political, social, and religious dissent; because it appeared at a time when Christianity became increasingly problematic (contingent on Darwinian thought and biblical criticism), that religion became attractive to and was sometimes embraced by many of the spiritually disillusioned. Buddhism was agnostic, in an age when the historical Jesus was called into question. Buddhism had a founder who, like Jesus, was admired for his self-sacrifice. Providing an inventory of Buddhism in Protestant terms, F. Max Müller thought its founder a kind of Luther; Buddhism a kind of Protestantism directed at Brahmanism; and Asoka a Constantine - although, he noted, Buddhist missionaries were peaceful. Therefore, both in Europe and in Africa, Buddhism was considered to be an ideal religion, particularly because that religion promoted tolerance at a time of political and religious intolerance. "The Buddhist religion," noted the African Bookman, "tells a person to feel friendship to all men, all beings high and low, and to be glad at heart. This goodness of heart must be shown to all men, to the good and the bad alike."¹¹

Buddhism also displayed an elevated morality that, as even the polemicist Bishop Bigandet noted, "made up for its capital and revolting errors." Buddhism espoused teetotalism; it was a religion of self-help; and it

offered a practical "theology of salvation." Ironically, however, while Max Müller argued that the most important element of Buddhist soteriology and reform was "its social and moral code, not its metaphysical theories," the measure of Buddhist truth - of Buddhist originality and orthodoxy - remained confined to a textuality that Occidental Buddhologists manufactured.¹²

At a time when European evolutionists queried biblical genesis, Buddhist cosmogony also appeared more scientific than Christian myths of cosmology. Even Karma, a "Rule of Law," was conceived of as a more precise understanding of causation than Christian concepts of original sin and judgement. Therefore, wrote R. D. Clark, president of the anthropological section of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science, the teachings of the Buddha were to be applauded. Perhaps Buddhism could even be adopted as the state religion? Since in South Africa Christianity was "losing its driving or compelling power, and from a national point of view was inferior to the ancient Roman religion," Clark inquired whether Buddhism could provide resources ensuring that South Africa secure a "more public spirited and self-sacrificing citizen." Generally, as the Butterworth editor of *The Blythswood Review* attested, "Buddhism would assist in the development and civilisation" of South Africa.

The extent to which Buddhism was embraced by South Africans was reflected in appeals to that religion in popular culture also. Olive Schreiner's *The Buddhist Priest's Wife*, written in the Karoo town of Matjiesfontein in 1899, for example, exemplified an interest that explored the continuities between Buddhism and human equality. Dissatisfied with the established orthodoxy of Christianity, Schreiner highlighted aspects of Buddhism, in particular the Buddha's teachings concerning social equality, that she considered consistent with her own opposition to the gender discrimination of the Victorian "Cult of Domesticity."¹³

The appeal of Buddhism was an attraction, therefore, that was mediated by concerns consonant with Victorian political and religious interests. Indeed, although Buddhism, inscribed in Occidental textualization, seemed to imply a reversal of the quintessential themes of theism, individualism, activism, and optimism that were espoused by the Victorian age, that religion was managed and ameliorated in ways that did not require a radical break with these and similar Victorian motifs. As both Philip A. Mellor and Thomas A. Tweed argued, Protestant Christian dissenters highlighted many continuities and parallels in Buddhism that made the tradition appear less eccentric. In this regard, Buddhism was both produced in the textualization of European salvage and inscribed within the limits and consent of Victorian dissent. Interpretive patterns that were established in the seventeenth century, such as a morphology of Buddhism and the search for the genealogy of Buddhist origins, persisted. But aspects of Buddhism that seemed incongruous to fundamental Victorian values and mores were deemphasised or ignored. Buddhism appeared in a form that some scholars, following Gananath Obeyesekere, called "Protestant Buddhism" or, following Heinz Bechert, "Buddhist Modernism." Buddhism became, again, an image of its acceptability in the wandering imagination of travellers and Orientalists.¹⁴

Exemplative of both an unease over Christian orthodoxy, and a desire to domesticate Buddhism within the confines of a Victorian worldview, were attempts made by Protestant dissenters in South Africa to reject traditional aspects of Calvinism while appealing to the universal truth of religion. Unitarians, among other dissenters, including Spiritualists and Theosophists (who might have given up the ideas of theism, of a personal creator, and a substantial self more easily than others), frequently abjured theological interpretations concerning the meaning of religion present in the Dutch Reformed churches in South Africa, for example. In response to what was

thought to be Calvinism's central concerns with human depravity and predestination, at least as reflected by the Council of Dort, these nonconformist dissenters proposed a more optimistic, positive theology that, as the corollary of an interest in the universality of religious truth, led to the omission of standard nineteenth-century definitions of Buddhism as pessimistic. Indeed, instead of an attack on the supposed quietism of Buddhism, many South African dissenters in the late 1800s affirmed the compatibility between Buddhist morality and Victorian social ethics. That agreement was reflected in social concerns ranging from the women's rights movement to temperance and antislavery. Consistent with appeals and attempts to prove that Buddhism was consonant with much of Christianity or positivist philosophy and, therefore, not exotic or demonic, supposedly unflattering comparisons with Catholicism were ignored.

Thus in spite of Thomas William Rhys Davids' certainty in the *Hibbert Lectures* of 1881 that there would not be "the slightest danger of any European ever entering the Buddhist order," many South Africans were drawn to Buddhism. Either as an alternative intellectual landscape or as a remedy for a Christianity deemed to be ailing, the interest was both manifold and "distressing." The extent of disquiet was reflected in a review in the South African *Christian Express* in 1899, the year that Schreiner wrote *The Buddhist Priest's Wife*. The reviewer suggested that South Africa was "the happy hunting ground of religious cranks." Those cranks included the "civilized" and "pseudo faiths" of Unitarianism, Spiritualism, and Theosophy, as well as the more remarkable new sects. "Robed in a silken surplice and wearing a crown on his head," the leader of one who appeared in the frontier territories, wrote the reviewer, "announced that he was the son of God."

He preached to his votaries and explained that the cross which he bore in his hand had been given him from God. Some of

his prayers he repeats in Latin to mystify and astonish his ignorant audience.¹⁵

Foremost among those who popularized alternative religions in South Africa, including Buddhism, were the Unitarians and Theosophists. Both movements sympathized with Buddhism, although each reflected a different interest in that tradition. For Unitarians it was the fact that Buddhism was a rational religion that was endearing, while for Theosophists Buddhism was appealing because it was fundamentally an esoteric religion.

Historians have tended to be either defensive or denunciatory about the role of each movement in shaping Occidental interest in Buddhism, in bringing, as Barthelemy St-Hilaire noted, and Max Müller endorsed, the "feeble hearted" to the "precipice where Buddha was lost." More recently, Christopher Clausen argued that one ought not "confuse an interest with Buddhism with a later interest in the occult that led to the founding of Theosophy." Likewise, Philip C. Almond, author of a comprehensive study of the history of Buddhism in Britain, suggested that although Theosophy was esoteric, "Buddhism, it certainly was not, at least in the eyes of most nineteenth-century interpreters of Buddhism." It seems clear, however, that the category "true" Buddhism was in the first instance itself, in Geertzian terms, a contested symbolic system. Debate concerning the correct interpretation of that symbolic universe inevitably occurred in the history of the tradition, not least in the record of Theravadin Buddhists in colonial Sri Lanka, whose understanding of what constituted Buddhism contributed to the invention of that category in nineteenth-century European scholarship. Therefore, the imaginary category "true" Buddhism, like Theosophical or Spiritualist interpretations of Buddhism, can never be "the real thing." Second, it appears untenable to erase as heterodox Unitarians, Spiritualists,

and Theosophists who contributed to vibrant public conversation and debate about the meaning of Buddhism in this country.¹⁶

In Chapter Three I explore that debate, analysing how Buddhism was mediated in South Africa in the nineteenth century by concerns that reinforced the varied interests of European philosophy and culture. Controlled by the limits of Victorian consent and ameliorated by the domestication of the exotic, the content of Buddhism remained contracted, however, to its textually imagined interpretation. Rarely did that conversation translate into contextually innovative practice.

The arena for this discussion, and the focal point for inquiry - an inquiry into the rhetorical devices employed to describe the Orient in early travel writings; an account of the comparative reflexes mobilized in order to interpret this material; and an assessment of the impulses implicit in Victorian debate about Buddhism - remained, however, that physical, fuzzy, geographical boundary between Europe and Asia in which description, interpretation, and conversation took place. That place was the Cape of Good Hope. Indeed, I argue that an important axis in the production of discourses concerning Buddhism resided precisely at that point between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, that "dream horizon" that constituted the limits of mediaeval symbolization and ideology, that was to remain the slash between the West and the Rest at least until Ferdinand de Lessep engineered the Suez Canal as an alternative passage to the Orient beginning in 1859 (almost by "divine will" wrote C. Louis Leipoldt). A compendium of travellers, writers, and readers persistently passed through that Cape frontier in their encounters with Asia. It was in their trespass of this imagined border between an internal European order and an external, alien, Oriental disorder that the *romance* of Buddhism was mediated. At the Cape, Buddhism was *salvaged*, arrested, and interpreted. It is at the Cape that Buddhism can also be recovered as one forgotten facet of a history of religions in South Africa.¹⁷

In what follows I document that contiguous geography, that impertinent history of travel, of tourism, and travel writing; of pilgrimage, missionary *perigrinationes*, and romantic and rationalist discourse in the contours of a South African imagining of Buddhism. I uncover a history, moreover, that attempts to predate the ellipsis of census, for I explore with travellers who wrote of a history of contagion that subsequently characterized the constitution of Buddhism. I suggest, however, that these pilgrims of the exotic and merchants of the colonial expanse, in their "discovery" of Buddhism, provided explanatory paradigms that were both habitual and antinomial. In a continued imagining of Buddhism in South Africa, they invented a mythology, an ontology that empirical evidence did not dislodge. Indeed, as Boies Penrose noted, the persistence of the marvelous myths that were confirmed despite experience to the contrary reflected the power of their imagination. Nonetheless, their persistence inscribed an exoticism that is not as unexpected as one might first think. Their imaginary constitution outlined a Buddhism that is not as alien to this religious landscape as the aphasia that omits it might contend.¹⁸

Chapter One: Travellers and Temples

The chance arrival on 27 April 1686 of Senora dos Milagros at the Cape marks an event of considerable religious significance. Accompanying the Portuguese Senora from Goa was a Catholic Jesuit priest, a Franciscan father, and an Augustinian monk. However, the conspicuous presence of a number of unfamiliar Asian clergy, three Asian ambassadors, as well as their unfortunate attendants, suggests that the presence of the "miraculous" Senora might have signalled an event of even greater importance to Protestant Cape colonists than the prospect of a Papal conspiracy.

The first published account of the shipwreck of *Nossa Senora dos Milagros*, Portuguese vessel, flagship of the vice-admiral, and charge of Captain Manuel da Silva, as well as a narrative of her unusual survivors, was extant at the Cape by 1688. More than a century later an account of the Asian "mandarins" was featured in the popular *Penny Magazine* and in 1857 the original French narrative was translated in two consecutive installments of the *Cape Monthly Magazine*. In all three reports, however, the narrator, and one of the men shipwrecked when the Milagros foundered off the Agulhas coast, informed readers of what was perhaps common knowledge at the Cape in the 1680s.¹

Abandoned by the Portuguese at the coast, and unable to exchange jewels for food with the Khoi beyond the Hottentots Holland mountains, the stranded Asian party walked for thirty days. Starving, they cooked a leather hat and even tried to eat a shoe belonging to the ambassador. The latter, given the responsibility of carrying a missal to Don Pedro containing a description of the religious practices adhered to in his homeland, attributed their eventual rescue, however, neither to the hat nor his shoe. Nor did he credit the kindness of two Dutch farmers who later found the shipwrecked

men and willingly exchanged Cape fare for foreign diamonds. Their rescue, he suggested, was due the sacred power of a monarch, King Narai. Their recovery, evidently, depended upon adherence to ritual purity. Holding the document, the ambassador noted

with what anxious care I have guarded it. When we halted at the mountains, I have always had the caution to place it at the high point, over the heads of those of our party; and placing myself a little lower, I remain at a fit distance to watch it.... If, unhappily, none of us should arrive at the Cape of Good Hope, who is charged with it last must inter it before his death, on a mountain if possible, or on the highest spot he can reach; so that having placed this precious deposit beyond insult or accident, he may prostrate himself to die near it, testifying by his death, the respect which he bore it while alive.²

Don Pedro was the familiar king of Catholic Portugal. King Narai, who ruled from 1657 to 1688, was the unfamiliar Asian monarch. The ambassador remained for some time unnamed. But together with his compatriots, including the subsequent narrator, Occum Chamnam, readers were aware that this nobleman was one of ten Siamese survivors to have disturbed the Honorable Van Beveren and the Secretary De Grevensbroek from their Saturday table at the Cape of Good Hope Castle on 18 May 1686. Carrying religious texts ritually - including perhaps a collection of Thai *suttas* - they were not only some of the first Siamese to visit the Cape. They were, as Buddhologist Eugene Burnouf noted, among the first Buddhists.³

Predating this Portuguese shipwreck of Siamese Buddhists by a year, another nobleman, a Portuguese convert called Or Pavisu Ta, stopped off at the Cape on his way back to Siam from Europe in early June 1685. However, on this occasion, and when Occum Chamnam arrived in Cape

Town from France for the second time in April 1688, Dutch interest focussed neither on Buddhist ritual nor on Asian belief. Dutch inquiry concentrated on French Catholic practice. That attention was not surprising. The Siamese Buddhists, who arrived in the Cape at a time when Catholicism was publicly discouraged, were escorted by the first and second French Catholic embassies to Buddhist Siam.⁴

That six Jesuits accompanying the first embassy were allowed ashore on the outward journey on condition that they abstained from ministering to the Cape Catholic community is also not unexpected. Arriving on Ascension Day, Company employees suspected that an attempt was afoot to smuggle the sacrament ashore when they observed learned Jesuits carrying a cylindrical leather case. That the case revealed a telescope for astronomical observation was evidently an occasion for more than a little relief.

The Cape Commander's passing interest beyond Catholic religious practice or French Jesuit astronomy to reveal concerns about Asian religion, however, is more startling. Perhaps it should not be. But in his doxology at the departure of the French clergy, following his recent return from the "Copper Colored Mountain" to the North, the Commander, Simon van der Stel, prayed that "the object for which you are going to China may be happily realized and that, by your means, many infidels may be led to a knowledge of the true God." The Commander of the Cape never stated whether this true God was a French Catholic or a Dutch Protestant. In June 1686, however, Simon van der Stel did not hesitate in imagining that Chinese or Siamese "foreigners" were not only unfamiliar Asians; not only were they not Catholic or not Protestant, but they were not religious. Buddhists were, in terms consistent with the most pervasive of comparative reflexes, those based on denial, "infidels."⁵

Although remarkable, accounts of the arrival of the *Nossa Senora dos Milagros* and the subsequent adventures of her Asian survivors were

nevertheless not singular. They reflect only one moment, a small fragment in three centuries of untold religious history, one occasion in an early encounter between Protestant Cape colonists and Oriental Buddhist visitors. Beginning with the ritual transport of Buddhist *suttas* along the Cape coast, such incidents suggest a repressed but imaginative history of travel writing and of a South African association with Buddhism. Such incidents document a geography of religious pluralism, however, that begins even earlier, with the remarkable descriptions of Asia depicted by Doctor Olfert Dapper.

An engraver of renown, the Dutch physician Olfert Dapper is best known to South African historiographers for his deplorable description of the Khoi. Originally published in 1668, the *Naukerige Beschryvinge* noted that the Cape inhabitants had "no religion" nor "even the trace of religion." They had "no churches and no congregations." Religion, defined in Christian terms as a "show of honor to God or the Devil," did not exist, although knowledge of "Humma" exemplified a type of "superstition."⁶

Two years after this influential work the writer concluded a remarkable account of Dutch activity in Asia, *Die Gedenkwaardig Bedryf Der Nederlandsche Oost-indische Maetschappye, op de Kuste en in het Keizzerijk van Taising of China*. That work was followed by an exhaustive three-volumed study of the Orient. In contrast to his earlier work on Khoi superstition, and to Simon van der Stel's denial of Oriental religions, the physician now noted that Asian people had a religious sensibility. The Formosans, on the island of Taiwan, believed in several deities who possessed curative powers. The outrageous rituals of healing the Formosans participated in, however, required a drunken, naked priestess to urinate upon the sick. Chinese religions on the mainland, although not as absurd or disgusting, suggested Dapper, were equally strange. One of the Chinese gods, called Quantekong, weighed twenty-two pounds and stood twelve feet and eight inches high. His weapons-bearer, a black god called Tzieutzong,

was depicted in an equally imposing and detailed copper-plate engraving. However, the deity called Pot-sou, noted the artist, would perhaps be more familiar to Christian readers, for she was the divine daughter of a Chinese king and, like the Catholic virgin, had "zonder oit man bekent te hebben, een kint ter wereld gebragt, welk zy Kachu noemen (without knowing a man, brought a child into the world, whom she called Kachu)." ⁷

Olfert Dapper was a successful writer. His books on Asia became classics of the genre. But he was not a doctor. Nor had he visited the Cape. Nor, indeed, had Dapper visited Asia. He had, in fact, never left Amsterdam. But, as was the case with the more infamous George Psalmanaazaar, the entirely fictitious, ignorant descriptions of Asian religions that the brave engraver imaginatively illustrated became powerful, more believable resources than even verifiable, first-hand accounts. Indeed, as John Allen observed, the imagination of imposters like Dapper stimulated the preconditions necessary for exploration. ⁸

Olfert Dapper's inventory, his anatomical autopsy of Asian religions, provided a compelling paradigm for Cape officials, many of whom, like Cape Commander Zacharius Wagenaer, later visited the continent that Dapper so vividly described. Dapper's deception was an imaginative invention of Asian religions that was consequently etched in a South African association with Buddhism. Therefore, while there were perhaps no Buddhists living at the Cape in the seventeenth century, aside from stranded "infidels" and Oriental aliens like the Siamese Buddhist survivors of the *Senora dos Milagros*, who were lodged in the home of a respected free-burgher for more than four months in 1686, there was a growing familiarity with and interest in this tradition. And although little remains that might document more accurately seventeenth-century Cape responses to the Asian Buddhist clergy, an indication of some lasting influence is suggested. As early as 1695 the Dutch traveller and writer Francois Valentijn reported that

Johannes Muller, a Stellenbosch *landrost*, owned an art collection numbering not a few "Oriental lions." These "unfamiliar figures" were arranged in the official's "jewelled garden." Similarly, two butchers, Adrian van Brakel and Engela Breda, possessed between them ten "lions of Buddha or dogs of Fo," the statuary traditionally depicted as guarding the entrance to Buddhist temple doors.⁹

But it was travel books rather than the articles of material culture that provided the most lasting account of Buddhism for Cape readers vicariously engaged in this seventeenth-century romance. Their perennial and often unsympathetic inventions, their rituals of the exchange of information and artifact, and their explanatory paradigms invoking a denial of Buddhism - in Ceylon and Siam, in China and in Japan - provide fragmentary resources that invite inquiry into expanding relations with religious pluralism in South Africa. I begin this inquiry with an account of some of the imaginative strategies that were employed by travellers attempting to interpret Buddhism in Ceylon and Siam. I note, however, that although the Cape can be perceived as a pivot between Europe and Asia, a nexus through which reports about Asia passed into Europe, from these earliest reports Buddhism remained a "pan-Asian" phenomenon. Although reporters could locate Buddhism in distinctive ways in Ceylon and Siam, or in China and Japan, these reporters also assumed that Buddhism transcended specific location and, as a result, provided terms for a unified representation of the tradition.

I. Ceylon and Siam

Olfert Dapper's books were neither the earliest nor the most informative accounts of Asian religions at the Cape in the seventeenth century. Joachim Von Dessin and Dominee Wilhelm Van Gendt, whose private libraries were

later to form the basis of the South African Public Library, both owned copies of a description of Ceylon by Phillipus Baldaeus, the Dutch minister infamous for his involvement in a baptismal furore at the Cape two years prior to the arrival of the *Milagros*. Both collectors also possessed the familiar and informative descriptions of Sinhalese Buddhism inscribed in Francois Valentijn's popular writings.¹⁰

Baldaeus, whose *Naauwkeurige Berschrijvinge van Malabar en Choromandel en het Machtige Eyland Ceylon* was published in 1672, was one of the first four dominees to work in Ceylon when, in 1656, the coastal lowlands of the island passed from Portuguese to Dutch colonial control. Unlike Dapper, Baldaeus spent almost nine years on the island, including one as an army chaplain, in several parochial duties as a priest in the towns of Galle and Jaffnaputnam. But his only contact with Sinhalese Buddhists occurred when he failed to convince Catholic converts, consequent on Portuguese mission work, that their beliefs, based on "image worship," were idolatrous.¹¹

After a brief stop at the Cape in 1685, a short spell as a Dutch Reformed Church dominee in Batavia under previous Governor of Ceylon Rijklof Van Goens (the man responsible for Baldaeus' dismissal), and three years in East Java and Ambonia, where a lasting friendship with Adriaan van der Stel was cemented, Francois Valentijn published what many considered a better description of Asian religions in his *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien*. That five-volumed text, printed in 1724, became the definitive, encyclopaedic statement of Dutch-Asian encounter in South Africa, even though its author displayed little first-hand knowledge of the Orient. Drawing on, among others, the writings of Joris van Spilbergen, who spent some time in Kandy as admiral of the Dutch fleet in 1601, and whose work was known to Dutch East India personnel at the Cape, Valentijn's account of Buddhism in Ceylon was in fact remarkable.¹²

The dating of "Buddum's" birth, and narratives of his youth and subsequent encounters with the sick and elderly, were related in detail. While mistaking "Ziddatate Coemanea, dat is, de Prins die hoopt te doen (Siddartha Gautama, that is, the Prince of Hope)" as the oldest Sinhalese *prophet*, the writer dismissed as foolish Couto's earlier and popular belief that the Buddha was either a fugitive Syrian Jew, an Israelite, or a disciple of the Apostle Thomas. The overriding interest in Valentijn's account of Sinhalese Buddhism, however, was one that focussed on a mountain in the Kandyan interior. Interest in this mountain persisted in South African imaginings of Buddhism. The mountain, Adamsberg, or Adam's Mountain, said by Christians, Muslims, and Hindus to be a sacred site, signified the burial place of "Sogomom Barcoan," the Sakyamuni Buddha whom the writer identified by the honorific title Bhagavan. Valentijn meticulously inventoried the *rupas* representing the Buddha that were to be found in temples upon the mountain's peak. He reported, for example, the size in feet and inches of the eyes of the Buddha, of his ears, nose, mouth, shoulders, arms, the palms of his hand, his middle finger, and the soles of his feet.¹³

The marvelous minutiae of the Buddha's physique, advanced to compensate for his own ignorance and based, like the census, on archetypes of sequential opposition - male and female deities, and deities, like Dapper's Quantekong and Tzieutzong, of different colors - provided Valentijn's audience with an iconic reference of Sinhalese Buddhism that was both compelling and convincing. Indeed, the narrative constraints and heuristic strategies employed in Valentijn's detailed description produced for his readers an effect of truth that was entirely believable, if not verifiable. By employing analogy and a rhetorical vision in which symmetry, inversion, and opposition made an "incredible" Buddhist body appear as familiar as any other physical body, for example, Valentijn outlined for his readers an index that made unfamiliar Buddhist iconography appear credible.¹⁴

Statuary and "idolatry" was not the only reminder of Buddha's legendary life in Ceylon, an island, noted Cape readers, whose history of conquest reflected a colonial narrative that often intersected that of their own. Cast in a rock on the mountain summit was the Buddha's footprint and in a temple at its base, his tooth. Chinese Buddhists, noted Valentijn, dug up the toe imprints in the rock and, in 1560, Portuguese Catholics stole the tooth from the temple. Initially denying the authenticity of the tooth, the Portuguese attempted to exchange that relic for a large ransom. On orders of the Archbishop of Goa, however, the relic was subsequently, publicly burnt, and its ashes thrown into the sea. Sir Thomas Herbert, whose *Travels* were published in 1634, and who, like Valentijn, visited the Cape and made his writings available there, provided another narrative of the myth. The Sinhalese, "over-run with the stinking weeds of Heathenism," had the "infamous Apes-tooth God" confiscated by Archbishop Constantine, but a "crafty Buddhist well forged a counterfeit."¹⁵

It was not only under Dutch or Portuguese occupation that Cape colonists became acquainted with Sinhalese Buddhism, with the "bizarre" myths of the Buddha's footprint, or even with narratives consistent with an exchange of his mandibles. Translating the unknown into a narrative that simultaneously maintained difference but reduced the distance represented by oceanic expanse, Robert Percival, a British soldier with the Nineteenth Foot Regiment that attacked the Court of Kandy, and a writer whose published account of Sinhalese Buddhist practice was available at the Cape in 1803, contradicted earlier description: Initially contending that these Asian people, unlike the Formosans and Chinese, but like the Khoi, were not religious but "superstitious," he later contested that, because they cried at night in a voice "reminiscent of the devil," Sinhalese Buddhists were to be regarded as Satanic.¹⁶

Sensory perceptions of sight and sound, that reflected or recorded the

actuality of presence or witness, were not necessary prerequisites for the archivist of Asian religion. The interplay between descriptions based on imaginary visual and auditory faculties - to see and make seen what was invisible and to hear and make heard what was inaudible - could persuade, organize, restrict, and control belief in the credible procedures of what Francois Hartog called "autopsy," or what Michel Foucault pointed to in the notion of "panopticism." But sighted experience could also conceivably delimit resources for potentially more compelling description. James Holman, one of the most remarkable world travellers and writers to pass through the Cape on his way to Ceylon, was aware of that fact more than most itinerate adventurers.¹⁷

Holman arrived in Colombo in late March of 1830. In terms reminiscent of Valentijn's earlier interest, he proceeded to measure the Buddha footprint. He touched a bronze figure of Buddha and noted that the sacred tooth relic "looked like a piece of dirty ivory." This last observation was strange, because James Holman was blind. Holman remained blind in spite of the fact that, when in Mauritius, on his way back to the Cape in December of 1830, a Sinhalese prisoner and "Boodoo (Buddhist)" priest, named Il-Higamee, who was exiled from Kandy after leading a failed revolt against British occupation while dressed as a bogus prince, claimed he could restore the traveller's sight if granted access to suitable remedies.¹⁸

"Deprived of that organ of information," however, Holman was "compelled to adopt a more rigid and less suspicious course of inquiry in Ceylon, and to investigate that which other travellers dismissed at first sight." While in the Buddhist state of Siam, however, a state that, like Ceylon, also laid claim to its own footprint of the Buddha, the rigid course of authority that earlier freed Holman "from the hazard of being misled by appearances," assuring that he was "less likely to adopt hasty and erroneous conclusions," led the writer to declare that the Siamese subscribed to no

particular form of faith or doctrine. The Siamese lacked not only religion, recalled Holman, they lacked a "generic word to express it." Buddhists, as Simon van der Stel intimated nearly two centuries earlier, were "infidels." In fact, suggested Holman, employing terms used by Baron in his popular and entirely fictitious account of Tonquin - one in which the writer claimed to be Tonquinese and, therefore, an authority able to dispute more legitimate travel narratives - Buddhists were an "impertinence" to the Christian faith because they did not believe in a religion. Rather, Buddhists believed in a "superstitious foppery."¹⁹

For ignorant, sightless, South African readers, however, Siamese Buddhists in the early seventeenth century, as I suggested, were not necessarily perceived of as simply "infidelitous," "impertinent," or "superstitious." The presence of Occum Chamnam, as well as subsequent published accounts of the French embassies to Siam by Gui Tachard, Chevalier de Forbin, and the Abbe de Choisy, suggested that a fuller picture of Siamese Buddhism was available for the armchair traveller at the Cape. Thirty years after Holman, however, the Bishop of Kaffraria, Henry Callaway, remained convinced that Siamese Buddhist worship "consisted in superstitious ceremonies and offerings made for propitiating the wicked." Therefore, Siamese Buddhism, noted the South African Bishop, was "in opposition to the real doctrines of genuine Buddhism."²⁰

But if the religion of the Siamese was not superstitious, it was certainly "very odd." The Siamese knowledge of divinity, in particular, appeared somewhat "confused." In fact, averred the French Catholic traveller Gui Tachard, even if one fully understood "the books that are written in the *Balis* [Pali] Language," Siamese Buddhist narratives concerning a god "consisting of Spirit and Body," a god omnipresent, all-knowing, and "more radiant than the sun," were extremely confused. Therefore, advancing the imprecise precision of his own theological classificatory rubric, Tachard

declared that although the Siamese described god-like beings, that description was "not proof that they acknowledged, at least at present, any Divinity." The Catholic traveller concluded that the Siamese were perhaps not superstitious, but that "hitherto we ought rather to call them Atheists than Idolaters."²¹

Even atheists, however, were aware of an afterlife and of some form of judgement, declared the writer. The Siamese Buddhist's knowledge of these concepts was nonetheless estimated to be unusual. Tachard asserted that their knowledge of the postmortem experience was in fact evidence of a "ridiculous imagination." According to Tachard, therefore, the Siamese believed that

Prayomppaban hath a Book wherein the Life of every particular man is registered, that he continually reads it over, and that when he comes to the Page which contains the History of the man, he never fails to sneeze. Therefore it is, they say, that we sneeze upon Earth, and thence proceeds the Custom they have of wishing a happy and long Life to all that Sneeze.²²

Documenting a theory for the origin of religions that was pervasive at the time, and one that consumed the diversity of "primitive" peoples from the Cape Khoi to Siamese Buddhists, Tachard argued further that these Theravadin accounts of heaven and hell, contingent upon sneezeing, implied that a creator was present in Buddhist myths of cosmogony and eschatology. That creator, according to Tachard's authority, formed a world that, by contrast to the scientific calculations of the Chinese, whom the French Jesuits visited, was clearly absurd. The earth, according to Tachard's postulate of Siamese Buddhist myth, was flat and square, while the cosmos consisted of many realms, each pertaining to a different countenance. "The Inhabitants of

the first," the Jesuit noted, "have a square face, of the second a round, and of the third a triangular." If this history sounded bizarre and entirely fictitious - "a mixture of Christianity and the most ridiculous fables" - as Tachard suggested it did, it was perhaps not a mixture based on what the writer considered to be remnants of the Christian doctrine. Tachard's invention, his authority, was blinded by a perception of Buddhist mythology that was interpreted to be an absurd "admixture."²³

Perceptions of Sinhalese and Siamese Buddhism at the Cape during early seventeenth-century oceanic expansion were based, as I suggested, on layers of imaginative but convincing fiction. Such perceptions were ancillary to the myopia of distance and to the inventions of those, like Dapper, who never left home, or, in the case of Holman, to those who were physically blind. But while many impulses were based on entirely erroneous, random, and fanciful imaginings - a totalized compendium of Asian exoticism that was more autobiographical than ethnographic - by the time of increased Dutch colonial expansion, most interpretations were also grounded in peculiarly astigmatic reflexes of Christian comparison and denial.

Before discussing interpretive reflexes implicated in a history of Buddhism's denial, however, I want to look more closely at the nature of ritual exchange that, like creative imagination, characterized early South African encounters with Buddhism. I also want to move from a Cape interest in primarily Theravadin Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Siam to exchanges of information situated in the very different geographical province of China.

II. China

When Joris van Spilbergen arrived in Ceylon in 1604 he was asked by the King of Kandy if the Dutch, like the Portuguese before them, adorned their

churches with images of the Virgin and Saint Peter. The King inquired whether Dutch Protestants also believed in a God whom, he recalled, Portuguese Catholics said was risen from the dead. Evading the Buddhist's incisive theological inquiry, the admiral of the Dutch fleet suggested, first, that Catholic iconography was a distortion of Christian belief. Because Catholics venerated statues not dissimilar to those found in Sinhalese Buddhist temples, Spilbergen argued, Roman Catholicism was closer to Buddhist idolatry than it was to Protestant faith. Second, illustrating the merging of material exchange and religious dialogue in an attempt to evade debate and prove the superiority of Protestant power, Van Spilbergen offered the King an equestrian portrait. That portrait, a picture of the Prince of Orange resplendent in armour as he appeared on the field of battle in Flanders, aimed to provide material evidence of Dutch military power and proof of the infallibility of Protestant faith.

Material exchange as a coefficient of religious dialogue occurred frequently in the far-flung reaches of the Dutch seaborne empire. But ritualized trade was also localized at the Cape. For example, when the French embassy to Siam under Chevalier de Chaumont departed from the Cape in 1686, Simon van der Stel announced the departure with a prayer. That prayer was a Protestant gesture that was directed to ensure Catholic success among Asian "infidels" in China. However, the departure of the embassy was marked by another exchange: The Cape Commander, on receipt of a microscope and burning glass from the Jesuit astronomers, immediately reciprocated with a gift of tea and canary wine. But later, on passing the Company gardens, Van der Stel asked of the French a further small favour: He requested a pair of koi. Not to be confused with the human Khoi of the Cape, these koi were Oriental fish.

William Dampier, who arrived at the Cape in 1691 for a stay of seven weeks, also asked for a Khoi, this time a human being, in exchange for a

tattooed "painted prince" from Asia. The "obscure notions of Deity" in Tonquin and the visual images of "idolatry" in Buddhist Siam introduced the traveller to both inanimate iconography and living, breathing, authentic idols. Dampier now wanted to exchange his painted Asian "idol" for a Khoi slave from the Cape. However, the traveller's proposition to trade in Asian and Khoi humans in Africa was in part idiomatic of a conversation that was deployed in order to compare religions at the Cape. Dampier noted, for example, that although in Asia there appeared a plethora of deities and places of worship, whatever their obscurity, in Africa local belief was marked by the absence of gods. The Khoi, as Africa's internal Other, he noted, were without religion. Unlike Asians in the Orient, Africans could boast neither of a "temple nor an idol."²⁴

On all three occasions, material exchange was the corollary of a more far-reaching dialogue, one implicit in the emerging relations between Dutch mercantilism and Asian religion. These were ceremonial encounters, as political historian Mark Francis suggested, that were indicative of symbolic and ritual structures of visible authority and expanding colonial power. These were ceremonial ritual structures that were also present in colonial relations between Britain and China. Indeed, the Earl of Macartney, who was the Envoy Extraordinaire to Russia before his appointment as Governor of the Cape, was Britain's first Ambassador Plenipotentiary to China on a mission that was predominated by ritual exchange. Macartney's Comptroller of the Household, John Barrow, was first to be implicated in the ritual exchanges that characterized the mission and, like Macartney, was well known to South African colonists. Barrow in fact served as Private Secretary to the first British Governor of the Cape and, after three journeys into the interior, was appointed as Auditor-General of the colony. However, his journey to Asia as Macartney's auditor, as far as the Chinese were concerned, was not an undertaking that further negotiated commercial interests and balanced the

accounts of an expanding British empire. Indeed, the Chinese assumed that Barrow and Macartney arrived in China on an extended tour to pay material tribute to the Emperor. Macartney and Barrow were prepared for such a transaction. Barrow brought with him the best of Britain: Sword blades forged by Sir Thomas Gill; Josiah Wedgwood pottery; Matthew Boulton hardware, and numerous inventions. These inventions included a French Villiamy clock; Smeaton's diving-bell; a hot-air balloon; a telescope made by the Cape astronomer William Herschel; and a "planetarium," translated by the Chinese Catholics who accompanied Macartney as a "geographical and astronomical, musical clock" that represented in miniature the planetary constellations.²⁵

The Cape Governor soon viewed a similar celestial microcosm when he visited the vast imperial parks at Jehol - a Chinese cultural "theme park," as historian Alain Peyrefitte noted, that was also a kind of cosmological and "architectural bonsai." Protocols of exchange, however, demanded that prior to his visit to the gardens the Cape Governor should perform the kowtow, the ritual of submission described in most standard sources on China, notably in the writings of the Jesuits Le Compte and Du Halde. Macartney could hardly refuse the customary symbolic capitulation, even if the emperor appeared to him more like an African "Solomon in all his glory" than the "Old Testament Canaanite, Noah," whom Du Halde depicted. But the Cape Governor also demanded of the Chinese a ritual of submission in exchange. He would agree to perform kowtow only if a Chinese official of similar status to himself participated in the same ceremony in front of a portrait of King George III, evidently brought on the journey for this express purpose.²⁶

Not surprisingly, ignorance of the Chinese tribute system led to the failure of Macartney's mission. However, an important ritual exchange was implicated in the face of a failed material transaction. That exchange was characterized by religious comparison. For example, following the

publication of Macartney's narrative in the first decade of the nineteenth-century, Cape readers began to contrast the doctrines and practices of Chinese Buddhists with the beliefs and rituals of their Protestant Governor and his Comptroller. Financial exchanges thus mediated concerns to locate Chinese beliefs and rituals within the contours of a history of religions at the Cape. As one consequence of those concerns, the Khoi, or "sneze-hotnot," like the Chinese from whom their name originated, were considered to be "barbarian." Le Vaillant even suggested that the Khoi, like the Chinese, lived in separate "cantons."

These and other forms of comparative analysis were to be expected insofar as Occidental travellers journeyed to Asia through the Cape. However, comparisons were also based on the fact that the Chinese and other Oriental peoples lived in Africa. Among an Asian population at the Cape as early as 1652, for example, were a number of Siamese slaves who, according to the nomenclature of a fictive biblical kinship, were given names like Samuel and Jacob. The Raad van Justisie even recalls that in the year 1782 two Asian slaves, Spadilje and Ontong of Siam, were bound to a pole, whipped until the blood ran, set in chains, and imprisoned for a life of hard labour on Robben Island after they were caught breaking into a butchery in Kalk Bay and robbing a wine cellar in Stellenbosch.²⁷

Many attempts were made to establish a more ancient historical connection between Africa and China. As early as 1614, Peter Kaerius, a Dutch mapmaker, asserted that a number of Madagascans were "transplanted out of China." This thesis was pursued by Razafintsalama, who attempted to show that Chinese Buddhist monks colonized Madagascar, but was denied by Solange Thiery on the linguistic premise that too few Malagasy words contained Sanskrit origins. Two years after the Cape fell to Van Riebeck, Charles de Paravey even tried to identify ancient Chinese records associated with the biblical Queen of Sheeba as evidence of an earlier Buddhist

encounter with Africa. The notion that Africa might once have been Buddhist was pursued by a number of subsequent South African historians, ranging from George McCall Theal in the nineteenth century to Raymond Dart in the twentieth. Theal suggested that the Bantu migrated into Africa from Asia. In successive volumes of the *South African Journal of Science*, Dart explained that Khoi physical characteristics were derived from Chinese Buddhist intermarriage in "pre-Bantu" southern Africa. Other links were occasionally identified: The cave paintings of San "troglodytes" were attributed to a prior Chinese Buddhist influence, while the cairns constructed by southern African Khoi were deemed exemplary of an architectural archetype consistent with the Buddhist *stupa*.²⁸

Not all South African scholars shared these diffusionist theories. Wilhelm Hendrik Immanuel Bleek, for example, argued on philological grounds for a connection between Khoi and Sanskrit languages. Bleek suggested, however, that "as far as regards their internal and external peculiarities and features, the Aborigines of Africa" were much nearer to the Europeans than "not only those of both the Americas, of Australia, and the Malay Islands, but also the inhabitants of the more Eastern parts of Asia." According to Bleek, therefore, although there was evidence of a similarity between African and Asian languages, the Khoi had more in common with European Christians than they had with Chinese Buddhists.²⁹

Whatever misgivings we might have concerning these theories, it is undeniable that Buddhists did travel between Asia and Africa. As I suggested, as early as the third century North Africa in particular was not a provincial margin in accounts of Asian Buddhism but a metropolis foundational to the imagining of Buddhism in Europe. Later, as historians J. J. L. Duyvendak and Teobaldo Filesì point out, mediaeval transcontinental travel between China and East Africa was commonplace. For example, in 1409 the Chinese Emperor Yung Lo sent an Asian eunuch called Cheng Ho

to the region with orders that the traveller "set forth his utterances before the Lord Buddha," whose followers the Emperor possibly expected to see on the continent. As W. Fuchs illustrates, Chinese Buddhists were competent cartographers and could by that time also describe in some detail the geographical topography of South Africa. However, such travels, as part of a wider narrative of the arrival of Buddhist missionaries and travellers in the Occident, for the Chinese anyway, were merely forms of exchange in which foreigners would show the Emperor submission and acknowledge Chinese cultural superiority.³⁰

One of the most astounding aspects of Chinese superiority, as far as the blind traveller James Holman was concerned, was the system of Chinese religion, a religion that, "like the religion of America," was based almost "entirely upon the voluntary system." In China, noted Macartney, "Lamas and Bonzes [Buddhists], Parsees, Jews and Mahometans lived together in peace." Clearly, the Chinese upheld a system of belief that was "as yet uncommon in Europe" - or indeed in Africa, if the Cape Commander's comments on entering a Buddhist temple at Tong-Siou are any indication: Many Chinese temples were founded by Bonzes who were "munificent bigots," asserted Macartney.³¹

But if Macartney's Cape readers were initially to believe that Chinese Buddhists were bigots or, following Macartney's counsel, that the Chinese were tolerant of all religions, ensuing readings might have considered a more Catholic imagining. Indeed, subsequent accounts of Chinese Buddhism in the works of Barrow and Macartney suggested that the Grand Pagoda, housing "eight-hundred priests or lamas of Fo," the Buddha, was not unlike the Catholic cathedrals of Europe. The paraphernalia of religion displayed in Asia, "the altars, images, tabernacles, censors, candles and candlesticks ... have no small resemblance to the holy mummeries of the Romish church." The number of Buddhist icons and statues that were to be found in temple

compounds in China were also of note, although these idols were not reminders of Catholic form but of Greek or Egyptian origin. "Probably coeval with the Cybele of the Greeks and the Isis of Egypt," Barrow suggested.³²

Early perceptions of Buddhism by travellers in Ceylon, Siam, or China, whose writings were familiar to Cape readers, were stimulated, therefore, by the rhetoric of imaginative but authoritative ignorance. Initiated by the traverse of distinct boundaries between the known and the strange, they produced an imaginative "ethnography" that resulted in the construction of religious identity. That identity was a culturally postulated construct, however, that was also premised first on perceptions of Asia as geographically distinct, and second on a belief that the Cape was a boundary between the familiar and the foreign, the point beyond which religion and society was distinctively Other. Ignorance and authority were modulated, nonetheless, by the impulses of a consequent exchange. Transactions and encounters with religious dissimilarity, as we have seen, made strange Oriental religions appear familiar. But these encounters also collapsed geography and made a quotidian history of religion at the Cape appear exotic. Manifested in books and journals, and in the travels of mountebanks, missionaries, and administrators, technologies of ignorance and exchange consequently augmented new paradigms for reevaluating the nature of what it meant to be religious on the southern tip of Africa. Those transactions also suggested that, even in seventeenth-century South Africa, Buddhism was not new.

With the shape of religion in South Africa reconvened, an assesment of the comparative reflexes that manipulated and absorbed Buddhism into similes and known forms and patterns of religion appears appropriate. Indeed, since Buddhism was viewed as an Oriental religious expression not dissimilar to Greek or Egyptian mythology, or, particularly when invoked by

Protestants as part of an anti-Catholic invective, as an example of Roman Catholic practice, an analysis of the metaphors that were employed to make sense of the morphology of Buddhism is required. However, while less familiar constructs, including the newly discovered facets of Hindu, Zoroastrian, or, more frequently, Muslim belief, ritual or practice were used to measure the strangeness of the Buddhist tradition, that religion was also classified and inscribed within genealogies of familiar origin. In an attempt to assimilate Buddhism into these paradigmatic or culturally iconic references of sameness or difference, Buddhists were nevertheless denied distinctiveness and exteriority. Though Buddhism was gradually narrated by Occidental travellers and their readers, who were drawn to its apparent exoticism, Buddhists became exemplars of an author's imagination rather than an index of their ethnographic reliability.

Before looking more carefully at these strategies of comparison, that grew exponentially in the nineteenth century, I focus on more violent forms of religious imagination, those based not on absorption or assimilation, or morphology and genealogy, but those founded on exclusion. I draw attention to the strategies of denial that perceived Buddhism to be a form of "paganism," rather than religion. As Michael T. Ryan observed, that perception was appealing precisely because of its lengthy history, that went back to Patristic antiquity, and because it was a broad enough term to embrace all forms of Asian "superstition," "heathenism," and "idolatry." Therefore, I examine the taxonomies of denial that became pervasive in the seventeenth-century romance of Buddhism. But in exploring moments in this narrative history of denial I expand the heuristic geographic boundaries of Asian Buddhism utilized thus far to incorporate early Cape perceptions of Buddhism that congregated in Japan.³³

III. Japan

If Olfert Dapper is remembered in southern Africa for his fictitious reputation as travel writer and bogus physician, Carl Pehr Thunberg is recognized as legitimate as both. The degree of Doctor of Medicine was conferred on him while he was in the colony for three years between 1773 and 1776, and, after writing about his travels in Japan, Ceylon, and the Orient, he was appointed, following Linnaeus, Doctor of Botany and Professor of Medicine and Natural Philosophy at Uppsala.

Much of Thunberg's work, and subsequent academic interest in it, understandably focuses on botanic taxonomies of classification. Thunberg's travelogue was, however, also an informative inventory for early Cape readers of Asian culture and religion, including Buddhism. True to Linnaean form, a formula that provided a convenient methodological framework for registering the differences of discordant classes, his four-volumed work on Asia not only suggested a classificatory system for botany, but advanced a taxonomy in which the *genus* and *species* of Asian religions emerged as a distinctive category of the Orient.

Drawing on Christian paradigms of exclusion, the taxonomist wrote somewhat aptly, for example, of the genus religion, species Ceylon, by referring to the etymological and historical root of the word *bodhi*-tree, the tree under which the historical Buddha was reported to have attained enlightenment. "The *ficus religiosus*," he suggested, was called by the Sinhalese "boga," because they "believe that the god Budu reposes under it." The Dutch, by contrast, called the *bodhi*-tree a "duyvel's-boom (devil's tree)," presumably since the Buddha was thought to constitute some form of synecdoche for Satanic disorder.

Thunberg's taxonomy, invoking a Christian theodicy and drawing

attention to both Dutch etymology and Protestant demonology, indexed Sinhalese Buddhism within the *genus* of a theistic religion. That classification gained credence perhaps when on his arrival at the Cape Thunberg supplemented lexicography with iconographic evidence that suggested that Buddhism was similar to some Christian forms of religion: The founder of Cape botany carried with him a Sinhalese "god Budha." The god, represented in a stylized iconographic form familiar to Asian Buddhists, was to be found, noted Thunberg, in Buddhist "churches sitting with his feet across, after the Indian fashion, with long ears which reach down to his shoulders." According to Thunberg, therefore, Sinhalese Buddhist icons were not unlike Christian statues, while Buddhist temples were similar to Christian churches. Consequently, Buddhism was a theistic religion. Arriving in Nagasaki in 1775, however, Thunberg argued that the *genus* religion, *species* Japan fell into a somewhat different taxonomy. He noted that Japanese Buddhism was not a *religion*. Japanese Buddhism was a form of "*paganism*."³⁴

The precision of Thunberg's nomenclature was made possible by the help of the Emperor Dairi, who collected herbs for the botanist and showed him the ninety-six pillared colonnades of a two-storied Buddhist temple and *rupa* dedicated to the Diabud Buddha outside Yokohama. The temple allowed too little light, "doubtless proceeding from the architect's not having been grounded in the true principles of his art." But the *rupa*, recalled Thunberg, was sufficiently illuminated as to strike the viewer with terror and awe, "terror on account of its size and awe in consequence of the reflections it must naturally suggest." Continuing his account of physiology - above the drooping lobes of Asian aristocracy he detailed the Buddha's "hair curly, and its right hand raised" - Thunberg did, however, note, quite correctly, that the "sect that worships it is from India, and came here via Siam and China." Acknowledging subsequently that the Japanese were, therefore, not entirely

ignorant of the existence of an "eternal and omnipotent Being," Thunberg went on to suggest something of Japanese religious typology. He began by distinguishing Shinto from the "Budfo (Buddhism)" that was founded in India. While the former was the "proper and most ancient," originating, so the writer now suggested, in Babylonia, it was, he argued, contaminated by its "cohabitation" with Buddhism. Employing further Shinto nationalist criticisms, Thunberg concluded that Japanese forms of Buddhism occasioned "the most monstrous and absurd superstition."³⁵

His account of Confucian genealogy reflected a similar concern with the disruption of classificatory order: "Though they cannot be said to worship any God," he insisted, and "in their modern system we discover [only] the offspring of human wit," the ancient religion of the "Koofi exhibits evident traces of the divine laws of Moses." Along with taxonomies of order and the classificatory exclusions of denial, therefore, comparative patterns of similarity and the quest for source led Thunberg to present Japanese religions as coherent and perceptible only insofar as they could be measured according to familiar patterns or histories of Abrahamic origin. The botanist's imaginative presentation of Japanese Buddhism, however, appears to have ended in the same way as his etymology of Sinhalese Buddhism began. On a trip to the sacred cites of Jedo Thunberg quite astutely named Amida the "Supreme God" of the Buddhists, but suggested that these Pure Land Buddhists also believed in an evil deity called Jemma, or Emma. Perhaps Thunberg identified the Japanese god Yama. He may have identified the terms *jaken* or *jashu*, respectively wrong view or wrong attachment. In that case, the travelling botanist outlined a theological paradigm that reduced the distinctiveness of Buddhist terminology to an element of Christian theodicy. Whatever the representation, Thunberg tried to make sense of "syncretic Buddhist" practice by reducing Buddhism to a moment in theistic interpretation.³⁶

Almost a century after Thunberg's travels, five years after the "tolerant Americans" (under Commodore Perry's two armed steamships) arrived in Japan, and only seven years before Japanese travellers could legally emigrate and present their own taxonomy of Japanese Buddhism to Cape colonists, Henry Arthur Tilley arrived, as did Thunberg before him, in Simon's Bay, Cape Town. His writings also influenced early Cape perceptions and consequent denials of Buddhism. Moving to the Heerengracht hotel, however, the traveller was disconcerted to find that the South African Museum was, by now, nearly devoid of any Cape colonial natural curiosities. "Half the objects were from other parts of the world," including, he noted, "a musket, a bayonet, and a pair of scissors from Bomarsund which a Russian dame in her hasty flight had left as a trophy."³⁷

Russians, it seems, were omnipresent. In Cape Town, Macao, and Nagasaki, they began, like the British and the Americans, and the Dutch and Portuguese before them, to expand their sphere of mercantile domination. In Stellenbosch, Wellington, and Paarl, in South Africa, they contracted the accidental tourist Tilley and then took him to Japan. As part of Ivan Ivanovich's scientific party, Tilley arrived in Nagasaki in 1859, as did Thunberg before him, to help collect Oriental flora. However, while in Nagasaki he met not only Japanese but also Russian collectors from the ship *Ascold*. They had been living in a Buddhist temple for nine months. Immediately confronted with a distinctive foreign and exotic Other, Tilley could not deny the possibility of at least some form of homologous "family resemblance" between what he distinguished as Japanese Buddhism and the *genus* religion. Even if, as Lewis Grout suggested in an edition of *The South African Church Magazine and Ecclesiastical Review* two years earlier, that this resemblance might include within its construction the collective categories of "Paganism, Puseyism, Jewish and Mohammedan or Rational religions."³⁸

The "abstract doctrine" of Buddhism, "a religion whose rites can readily be performed," and the "ancient religion of the lands which is nothing else than the worship of ancestors," by which Tilley implied Shinto, were to be placed within a Christian or earlier Greek paradigm. An "absurd," albeit *religious* doctrine, Japanese Buddhism, for example, was thought of as a "trace of the labour of the Portuguese and Spanish missionaries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries." Although a religion, therefore, Japanese Buddhism was denied independent existence. It was located in Christian originality.³⁹

One of the most popular parochial journals at the Cape, the *Cape Monthly Magazine*, suggested another form of denial. That journal carried the story of a reader who, like Tilley, had been to Japan. The statue of Dybutz, the Diabud of Thunberg's visit, noted the correspondent, signing himself suitably, *Semper Fidelis*, was a "mighty memorial of years gone by," a remnant of what was once but now no longer a living religious tradition. Describing the Buddha statue in terms of a Greek comparison, *Semper Fidelis* noted that it reminded him of the ancient "Greek gods in the groves of Parnassus," and using the same anatomical detail that characterized the descriptions of Buddhist alterity distinctive of many other writers and travellers, "always faithful" denied Buddhism its singularity by concluding that "the bronze figure looked venerable" only because "time had lent it a subdued influence." In the reviewer's account, Buddhism was reduced and restricted to a lifeless, inert, and soundless remnant of a dead religion, made venerable only by its similarity with Greek statuary, and understandable only in terms of static iconography.⁴⁰

Iconography, however, as Lord Elgin's Private Secretary in China, the South African diplomat Lowry Oliphant admitted upon arrival in Nagasaki in 1859, was not altogether useful as a sympathetic mediator of Buddhist doctrine. To those "not deeply versed in the mysteries of the

religion" the thirty-five different Japanese sects that the South African diplomat differentiated, could not but "differ much from temples dedicated elsewhere." A Japanese traveller hoping to gain an accurate account of denominational diversity in the British Empire would likewise, he argued, "find but little light thrown upon the subject by the comparison and inspection of any number of cathedrals, churches, or chapels. And if his time was limited, and his interpreter imperfect and not versed in theology, one could not but hope to gain only a vague knowledge of those religious traditions and subtleties."⁴¹

Likewise, the *sight* of filthy Buddhist "bonzes" who were clad in ragged robes of grey serge and who "infested the place like vermin" was not the best indicator of Buddhist belief or ritual. Though the sensory organ of *smell* was employed to describe to sightless readers the numerous Buddhist *bhikkhu*, it only rendered the proximity of the monks covered in cutaneous eruptions "to the highest degree offensive and the odor of their sanctity altogether unbearable." Thus it was to the "monotonous" *sound* of Buddhist worship, "into which all else merged," that Oliphant was drawn. It was this sound, of men tapping wooden bells, chanting the mantra "Omoto Futo, Omoto Buddhu, Omoto Fuh throughout the livelong day," that marked Oliphant's description of Buddhism during his travels with Elgin in Japan.⁴²

Acknowledging that he could speak with little authority on the religions of Japan, Oliphant did inform his readers and followers at the Cape of some distinctiveness. The numerous sects were, he wrote all "modifications in diverse degrees of Buddhism and Sintooism" - the former of which could boast, Oliphant blindly estimated, three hundred and fifteen million adherents. Attempting a comparative understanding of the different interpretations held by each, Oliphant suggested that the "vague condition of future bliss, which the Buddhist looks forward to in Nirvana," clearly did not "approximate the Sintoo notion of Paradise." The Buddhist, asserted

Oliphant, escaped both heaven and hell in the "notion of metempsychosis." But while Buddhism and Shinto were classified as the "elevated, mystic tenets" of *religion*, other Japanese traditions, like Confucianism, were denuded in terms of a taxonomy of denial based on their construct and order within the class of "*idolatry*."⁴³

The classificatory paradigms mobilized in these interpretations were arbitrary and shifting. Constructing order from what appeared as Buddhist disorder by framing meaning within a taxonomy of denial, often one that correlated typologies of barbarous Buddhism with idolatrous Catholicism, these paradigms did, however, provide powerful and utilitarian resources for fashioning a coherent Protestant faith from within the confines of Christian discord. As Philip Almond argued, such strategies were particularly valuable at a time when European forms of Christian faith could ill-afford the complex challenge of an inquiry into alien Asian religious belief because of internal Christian division. Buddhism was of interest, therefore, not for any contribution it could make to the study of religion. Indeed, inquiry into the distinctiveness of Buddhism was thought a threat to fragile Christian ecumenism. Rather, strategies that imaginatively invented or denied the possibility of any coherent Buddhist meaning were employed to confirm what readers assumed was the coherent truth of Christianity.⁴⁴

The document of this inquiry, the imaginative account of inventiveness, exchange, and denial that I have lifted out of these travelogues, reflects an internal South African discord by gazing, albeit at times myopically, at Asian religions accessible to African readers. The record of that gaze is fragmentary. A *bricolage* of events and persons, it is a record that is discontinuous and bizarre, navigated here, out of necessity, into what seems an arbitrary assembly. It is a recorded collection, however, for which biography has been one possible entry, one that amplifies the arbitrariness of these chaotic encounters. A more informative analysis,

however, is one that reflects not just the arresting juxtapositions inferred in these encounters and denials, in these exchanges and imaginings, but one that seeks out the essential or elementary strategies within them. Although the advance of interpretive strategies of morphology and genealogy - the former a search for form and pattern, the latter an inquiry into origin and purity - reached greater articulation in the nineteenth century, a brief review of the impulses in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that gave rise to these paradigms is warranted.

IV. Morphology

That Thomas Herbert shaped his interpretation of Buddhism in terms of the persuasive patterns of the Greek mythologies of Pan and Priapus was not as impertinent a comparison as one might at first be led to believe. In an appendix to Macartney's journal, John Barrow transcribed Chinese statuary in Macao in terms of "the Cybele of the Greeks." Tilley, a half-century later, interpreted the Buddha figure in a Japanese temple in Nagasaki as idiomatic of Venus, Diana, and Mercury. And the South African, *Semper Fidelis*, cast the statue of Dybutz outside Yokohama, in Japan, into a matrix of Greek gods in the groves of Parnassus. For, in spite of the flow of more informed encounters and exchanges with the Orient contingent on the *carreira da India* and Da Gama's extraordinary journey beyond the southernmost tip of Africa, the template for cultural imagination remained structured, for the most part, on ancient Greek and Roman antiquity.⁴⁵

As I argued, however, in a history of the histories of a Buddhist imagination, exchange, or denial in southern Africa, the attempt to construct order out of what appeared as a Buddhist disorder in Asia was not only hung on a framework of classical morphology. Buddhism was also measured

according to the newly discovered patterns of Indian or Persian religions. Thunberg, although noting that in Japan the laws of Buddhism may have suggested a Mosaic or Levitical legalism, mediated that morphology by appealing to the diversity of the avatars of Hindu doctrine and philosophy. However, explanatory models making familiar the strangeness of Buddhism for South African readers were based more consistently on the immediate, tangible references of Catholic analogy, parity, or homology. It was Catholic morphology that was exemplary of one of the most enduring attempts to provide a "precise" account of the meaning of Buddhism in South Africa. It was not unusual that Catholicism should have been implicated in this exchange. Much of the information available to Cape readers about Buddhism was obtained from the writings of Christian Catholics in China.⁴⁶

The Cape Governor, Lord Macartney, although suggesting that Buddhist icons were "unlike anything on heaven or earth," remained convinced, for example, that what he saw in China was not dissimilar to what was indicative of a very terrestrial Catholic practice. Macartney and his Comptroller, Barrow, were not exceptions. George Leonard Staunton, Macartney's deputy minister during the embassy to China, who published an account of his experiences in the Orient in 1797, wrote for example, as Dapper did before him, of the resemblances between Buddhist and "Roman" worship and iconography at the temple that was requisitioned for the British retinue, even though he was forced to share this residence with the twelve Buddhist "bonzes" assigned to keep aflame candles in the shrine-room. The statue of Shengmu, or Sacred Mother, Staunton reported, was "a representation which might answer for that of the Virgin Mary." She sat in an alcove "with a child in her arms, and rays proceeding from a circle, which are called a glory, round her head, with tapers burning constantly before her." The legitimacy of Staunton's analogy between the Catholic saint and what was a possible description of Kuan Yin, the Buddhist *Bodhisattva*

of compassion, called Avalokitesvara in Sanskrit, were confirmed by the presence of Buddhist *bhikkhus*. The "bonzes," noted Staunton, lived an ascetic, cloistered life of fasting that recalled Franciscan penance. The *bhikkhus* were dressed in robes "bound with cords round the waist."⁴⁷

Thunberg used these comparative references quite freely: The Japanese Emperor was not unlike the Pope, and Japanese Buddhists carried rosaries. The reviewer of an 1853 edition of the *South African Church Magazine* likewise suggested that, with its idols and temples, Lhasa was not only a kind of architectural simile for Rome, but that the Buddhists in both Tibet and China practiced a form of ritual and spoke of an eschatological myth not unlike the Catholics in Europe. "Their love of pilgrimages and their expectation of a sanguinary battle, a kind of Armageddon," noted the reviewer, was "a particular kind of Romanism." Both Dapper and Tilley, we recall, similarly, somewhat fantastically, suggested that Buddhist *rupas* were no different than Catholic images of the Virgin. Buddhist iconography even mixed the Catholic and classical, as Tilley verified that the "virgin and child" and many other interesting deities, male and female, received prayers "much in the same manner and for the same purpose as they were two thousand years ago to Venus, Diana or Mercury."⁴⁸

Constructs of Buddhism in terms of Catholic morphology were reflected most significantly, however, in the works of Gui Tachard and his compatriot Simon de la Loubere. The former, I noted, suggested that Buddhist doctrine could best be interpreted in terms of a Christian theology and cosmogony. That the Buddhists described or believed in a god was not distinctive or questionable: Referring to the frequent use of *Samana Gotama* in the Pali texts, Tachard asserted that "Sommonakhodom," the Buddha, was undeniably a god. That deity, who like the Christian god, noted Tachard, was "carried up into the air in a throne all shining," was accompanied by "angels coming down from Heaven rendering the honors and adorations that

were due him." That god, Sommanakhodom, asserted Tachard, was betrayed: His brother, "Thevathat [Devadatta] could not without extreme jealousy behold the glory and the majesty that environed him." However, Sommonakhodom, Tachard concluded, "being armed with the tenth command ... easily triumphed over his enemies." Tachard's narrative, highlighting the similarities between Catholic Christology and the life of the Buddha, whose cousin attempted to form a new order, therefore, reinterpreted Buddhist mythology in order to legitimize the failings of Catholic missionaries. Thus, Buddhists did not convert to Catholicism, argued the Jesuit writer, because they regarded the missionary-astrologers as disciples of the wayward "son," Devadatta, and not the "father," Sommonakhodom.⁴⁹

In these respects, the similarities between Catholicism and Buddhism served to highlight the Jesuit's claim that Buddhism was developing a fabulous theism. Accordingly, the Buddha was identified by La Loubere not, as Tachard asserted, as an Oriental misrepresentation of the Christian Incarnate, but as a strange and complex anthropomorphism. La Loubere lamented that the Buddhists "made a man of the Spirit of Heaven and attributed unto him all the fables that I have related." Drawing on Harbelot, the Jesuit noted further that this anthropomorphic deity originated in Iran or Israel, insofar as Siamese Buddhist languages could be traced to Persian or Hebrew antecedents. Documenting the etymology for the word Buddha, La Loubere argued that *Suman* signified "Heaven" in *Persian*, or in *Hebrew* "Ancient." Consequently, "Sommonakhodom seems to signify the eternal, or uncreated Heaven," to which, La Loubere asserted, was to be added the word "Pout," "which in Persian signifies Idol, or false God, and which doubtless signifies Mercury amongst the Siameses."⁵⁰

In these terms, La Loubere concluded that the Buddha personified an adulterated falsification of Christian theism. The Buddha was the origin of

Asian ignorance rather than the historical founder of a religion.⁵¹

At work in the comparative morphology of linguistic and Catholic comparison, however, were two distinct impulses. First, the measure and pattern of a known religious tradition was used to present and represent an unknown Buddhist Other as alien to the category of religion. Buddhism was idolatry. This was true especially when advanced by Catholic polemicists. But second, modulating this invention of Buddhism in terms of familiar Catholic practice was the concern, influenced by an internal theological agenda, to suggest that Catholicism and Buddhism were not entirely dissimilar insofar as they were equally erroneous. That second strategy was advanced by Protestant travellers in particular. John Barrow, for example, suggested that Catholic missionaries were responsible for circulating calumnies against Buddhists because they were mortified by a striking resemblance. The theologically postulated idea of Buddhist similarities with Catholic practices was thus demonstrative of an internal discord commensurate with the rise of Protestantism. Indeed, prior to Protestant hegemony, Buddhism was primarily considered either as fantastic or demonic. With the rise of Protestantism, however, accounts of the Orient and of Oriental religions, including Buddhism, were indexed against a Catholic itinerary that sought to advance anti-Catholic sentiment. Mobilizing theological mechanisms of exclusion, Protestants could reclassify Catholics as infidels and idolatrous accomplices of Buddhists. However, because that sentiment reinforced denominational divisiveness, with the result that an internal, stable European religious order became increasingly insecure, many subsequent interpretations of Buddhism remained at the level of imagination or denial out of fear of destabilizing hard-fought theological alliances.⁵²

The Cape Governor in China was, however, one of many South African travellers who persistently employed an anti-Catholic form of invective. "The monstrous statues" in the seven-story Buddhist pagoda of

Peking, "all most horribly ugly and so ill represented," he argued, were exemplary of Catholic iconography. These *rupas* "were sufficient to match the longest catalogue of the Romish calendar," although, he suggested, "they can safely be worshipped by the Jews without incurring the guilt of idolatry." Similarly, the Reverend Elijah C. Bridgeman suggested in the *South African Missionary Register*, thirty years after Macartney, that although there was "nothing on earth to which Chinese Buddhism could be compared," the difference between Buddhism and Catholicism was so small that the only dissimilarity was that, "while one had no implements of war, the other was escorted by armed soldiery."⁵³

V. Genealogy

Attempts to situate Buddhism within familiar patterns of comparison - into the metaphors of Greek, or especially Catholic practice - were accompanied by interpretive strategies that also imagined a coherent origin for this Asian but unfamiliar religion. Rather than offering a convincing genealogy, an historically autonomous origin for Buddhism, however, most travellers, I argued, suggested metonymical relations that asserted the originality of Christianity. Indeed, Jesuit missionary endeavor in China was premised in part on the hope that the Orient would confirm the fact that, immediately after the Flood, the Chinese preserved in scrupulous theological detail Christian originality. William of Rubruck, in 1255, for example, traced Chinese religious inquiry back to a Christian-inspired logic. Others explored the possibility of Hellenistic origination. Barhebraeus, a Syriac historian writing some forty years after Rubruck, considered the Chinese Buddhist teachings on rebirth to have originated in Platonic thought on the transmigration of souls, an assertion that, given the new dating of the

Buddha, was not entirely illogical.⁵⁴

Not all attempts to account for Buddhist originality relied on denial. A repertoire of appropriatory acts were also employed. As David A. Scott noted, somewhat contentiously, Buddhist philosophy was admired and appropriated by Manichaean scholars as early as the third century. Mani's acceptance of rebirth, and the non-killing of animals, as well as his monastic code, Scott argued, originated in the Buddhist *Vinaya*. Facets of Buddhist soteriology, as Hans-Jurgen Klimkeit suggested, were apparently appropriated so as to accord Jesus rebirth in *parinirvana*.⁵⁵

Christian encounters with Buddhism were based, therefore, on genealogies that appropriated Buddhism. Consequently, Nestorian Christian missionaries as early as 635 CE viewed the similarity between virginal birth narratives in the mythological lives of the Buddha and of Jesus to suggest that Buddha was in fact God. Imaginative attempts to integrate Buddhism into a Christian genealogy even led to the accusation that the Nestorians were in fact more Buddhist than the Chinese. Conversely, Buddhists were sometimes characterized as being more Christian than the Christians. Wrote Papal envoy John Marignolli of the Buddhist monks in South China,

I must say that their rigid attention to praying and fasting and other religious duties, if they but held the true faith, would far surpass any strictness and self-denial than we practice.⁵⁶

That Valentijn and Holman thought that it was the Apostle Thomas' footprint they saw on "our progenitor's" mountain, instead of a geological indent of the Buddha on the "Kandyan" summit in Ceylon, therefore, was quite plausible. Vasco da Gama only a little earlier considered that Asian religions evidenced a type of Christian influence: Thomas Lopez, an eyewitness on Da Gama's second voyage to the East, chronicled how, in 1502, the navigator was given a staff by the inhabitants of Malabar that he thought was once the

possession of a previous Christian ruler in India.⁵⁷

Du Halde, one of the standard Catholic sources on China, and one familiar to Macartney and Barrow, similarly argued that Buddhism did not exist outside of a Catholic genealogy, describing how the Ark of Noah came to rest in China. Samuel Shuckford, an earlier compatriot of Macartney, noted that the sons of Noah originally instructed the Chinese concerning the Supreme Being. The Chinese Emperor, to whom he kowtowed, was not just a close relation of Noah, moreover, but the Patriarch himself.⁵⁸

Certainly, the Chinese Buddhist notion of a "Godhead," argued Barrow, was "confused." But Chinese Buddhism, less simple and more disguised in the "mysteries and machinery of oracular worship" than in Siam and Cochin, an area that Barrow accounted for in a published narrative that contained notes of his *Account of a Journey to the Booshuana*, in South Africa, originated in a different antiquity than the biblical tradition. Buddhism was derived from a Greek or Egyptian origin.⁵⁹

In Japan, however, Arthur Tilley we recall, continued to assert that Buddhism was based on the Christian Gospel that "in progress of time hath been altered and corrupted by the ignorance of their Buddou Priests." Like Thunberg, therefore, Tilley was also concerned with the genealogy of Buddhist origins, a Buddhism imagined in a lineage beginning with known Christian paradigms and denied autonomous status within taxonomies of classification. Tilley argued that this "absurd" albeit *religious* doctrine was nothing but a "trace of the labour of the Portuguese and Spanish missionaries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries."⁶⁰

While Tilley's attempt at documenting Buddhist origin was framed in what became a persistent explanatory paradigm in the nineteenth century - an original purity but an inevitable and latter degeneration - explanations grounded in a more historically accurate genealogy than Catholic Christianity were less consistent. There were occasional alternatives, however. Valentijn

noted that the Buddha could not be a prophet of Joshua, a Jew, or the disciple of the Apostle Thomas. Barrow's suggestion, that the founder of Buddhism was "one of the avatars of Vishnu, expelled by the Brahmins" was, however, quite distinctive. Barrow argued that the followers of Buddha "spread his teaching throughout Siam, Pegu, Thibet and in a great part of Tartary, whence it proceeded to China." The South African traveller's analysis, however, was only one of the many trajectories that were pursued in attempts to reconstruct the history of Buddhism in the collage of a southern African encounter with that tradition.⁶¹

I have illuminated some moments in that collage, that coexistence and codeterminance of the Cape as permeable, symbolic and geographic "boundary" between European imagination and the actuality of a Buddhist Orient. Employing the heuristic devices and often arbitrary constructs of the traveller's *romance* of this Asian religion - in the imagination, the exchange, and the denial - I have also argued that familiar religious histories in Asia that are recurring and habitual cannot be viewed as alien, exotic, and inconceivable in South Africa. Throughout I have documented how these explanatory models and experiences were implicated in the polemic of religious intolerance, but also in comparative strategies - taxonomy, morphology, and genealogy - that produced "knowledge" about Buddhism. Such comparative reflexes, in order to account for otherness or the exotic, were understandable, perhaps even necessary. But they acted as apologetic rather than cognitive modes of comparison.⁶²

By the nineteenth century many writers would deal exclusively with the emerging independence of a "Buddhism" created and inscribed within a Victorian, Eurocentric, and textualist imagination. These constructions of Buddhism were reviewed in many of the Cape's early journals and culminated in articles, written by South Africans before the turn of the century, that attempted to explain what was already not only a pan-Asian, but

a world-wide, universal religion. Most reviewers, however, failed to initiate a dialogue that moved beyond the diatribe inspired by Cape Commander Simon van der Stel as early as 1686. Most commentators failed to move beyond the point where Buddhists remained, like the shipwrecked Siamese, a seeming anomaly, a sort of infidel.

Chapter Two: Texts and Thankas

By 1842 the Cape reading public could access most of the popular narratives of Oriental travels. Joachim von Dessin bequeathed to the South African Library in 1761 the works of Valentijn and Dapper. The first inventory of the library, in 1821, also catalogued the collections of Hakluyt, Astley, Knox, Pinkerton (incorporating Nieuhoff, Herbert, and Thunberg), and Churchill (who described the second Cape Commander Zacharius Wagenaer's journeys to Japan, Tonquin, and China). But in 1842 the first book with the distinction of having the word "Buddhism" in its title was acquired: Edward Upman's *History and Doctrine of Buddhism*. Originally published in 1829, Upman's account of Buddhism remained a standard text throughout the nineteenth century. It was reviewed in the *Oriental Herald and Journal of General Literature* in the year of its publication. A half-century later, it was reviewed in an 1887 edition of the Eastern Cape journal, the *Christian Express*.¹

The importance of studying Buddhism, Upman argued, was twofold. First, as many as three hundred million people professed this faith, a figure that was vociferously contested by the South African reviewer in 1887. Indeed, citing the writings of Monier Monier-Williams and Friedrich Max Müller, this reviewer asserted the perennial argument that "lay Buddhists ought not to be regarded as Buddhist." Upman's estimation was faulty, the reviewer argued, since no distinction was made between "false" lay and "true" monastic Buddhists. Second, and more importantly, asserted Upman, the significance of studying Buddhism resided in the fact that this religion was one of the most original of religions. It appeared, Upman's reviewer informed Cape readers, that the author attributed to Buddhism "one of those

primitive creeds which were created by the first efforts of human reason when emerging from the darkness of the savage state."²

Upman's argument for Buddhist primordality, as I suggested, was contested and denied by many travellers. Buddhism was viewed not as an original religion but as a counterfeit reproduction of ancient Catholic, Hindu, Greek, or Roman practice. However, travellers, missionaries, and merchants founded their arguments on inventions, exchanges, and denials that were neither fixed nor coherent statements of a history of Buddhism. Consequently, in an attempt to distance scholarship from the amateurism of definition reflected in these accounts, and in order to provide a more "scientific," less partial catalog of the position of Buddhism, nineteenth-century scholars required that the religion be indexed not principally according to the traveller's wandering imagination, but in terms of the more factual precision of textualization. By the nineteenth century, narratives of Buddhism in South Africa were thus marshalled not primarily within the earlier motif of *romantic* invention, but in terms of the trope of redemptive *salvage*, where even the act of writing and the convention of material culture, as James Clifford and George E. Marcus assert, became allegories of redemption. In the process, Buddhism remained an Asian degeneration (a reversal of European progress), and an Oriental opposition (a reversal, or perversion of European Christian truth). Fixed and frozen in texts and objects, moreover, Buddhism, as practiced, was ironically considered to be degenerated from its own "authentic" origin, thereby becoming an opposition to itself.³

Prominent within the matrix of continued explanations of Buddhism at the Cape during the nineteenth century, were concerns not only for patterns of morphological relation or genealogical origin; even though these interests persisted. After the 1830s, when the production of periodical literature burgeoned, Buddhism was predominantly explained in terms of a

sophisticated index that presumed originality but described subsequent decay. Later, Buddhism was captured in collections of material artifacts that tabulated and displayed that history of atrophy. Therefore, in both texts and objects, Buddhism was analyzed according to the "fixed rules" of its degeneration. In recovering the originality of Buddhism, nineteenth-century commentators were consequently concerned with denominating deterioration. They undertook a redemptive quest for an original Buddhist purity in the midst of its evident corruption.

This image of the historical corruption of Buddhism; of its later decline; of an Asia seen as the *reverse* of a history that Europe recognized of itself - the history of a people once creative and powerful, but now inert and impotent - emerged as a result of colonial and Christian domination and expansion. Indeed, the circumscription of Buddhism was prompted not only by mediaeval fear or fascination; by the romantic curiosity of later travellers; or even by the intellectual concerns of the Buddhologist and linguist to salvage an earlier moment in human progress. Colonial agents conducted research into Asian religions initiated by the pragmatic necessities for administrative control. These necessities predominated among English scholars in particular. In France, a country that lost control over the majority of its Asian colonies, such impulses were downplayed. However, far from a disinterested academic interest, the translation and collation of Asian sacred texts in Europe was generally financed, as the preface to Monier Monier-Williams' *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* suggests, in order to facilitate missionary influence and colonial enterprise that would herald both the conversion to Christianity of Asian peoples and the coercion of local labour to aid the growth of a European capital market.⁴

Productions of Buddhism at the Cape reflected the dual concerns of these projects of conversion and control. Journals reviewing the writings of more influential textual adventurers saw the degeneration of Asia, and of

Buddhism in particular, as justification for increased missionary activity. For example, a reviewer in the *South African Church Magazine and Ecclesiastical Review* argued that the *Life of Gotama Budha* by Robert Spence Hardy would prove an indispensable aid for future missionary activity. It would enable Christian "soldiers" to convert or disarm Sinhalese Buddhists. Barthelemy St-Hilaire, whose *La bouddha et sa religion* appeared in 1860, argued that the *raison d'être*, indeed the *only* reason to study Buddhism was that it might increase appreciation for the perfection of Christianity. A reviewer of the popular works of Paul Bigandet, Bishop of Burma, similarly noted that while the writer's aim was merely to "expound the religious system of Buddhism, explaining its doctrines regardless of its merits or demerits," the best way to undermine the foundations of this "false creed," with its "capital and revolting errors," was to "lay it open to the eyes of all and exhibit it."⁵

The codification of Buddhist decay was contingent also on the possibility of contrasting an ideal textual Buddhism of the past with this contemporary but degenerate Asian instance. Defined in terms of this textual object, its Oriental manifestation was reviewed as an inadequate reflection of Buddhism, rather than as the religion itself. As Frederika Macdonald asserted in the *Fortnightly Review*, it was "in the *suttas* or discourses of the Buddha alone that we find this pure unalloyed religion of the intellect free from any taint of superstition or shadow of supernaturalism." Consequently, the historical inventory or index of the truth of Buddhism was entangled in the simultaneous search for textual independence and the reification of a Buddhist "canon." Buddhism became confined to translation and tabulation. It became, as Philip Almond suggested, progressively less a living religion of the present than it was a religion of the past "bound" by its own textuality.⁶

A textual "theft" that was "penetrated" and "pierced," Buddhism was thus "exhibited" and "presented." Buddhism was, like the Buddhist objects in

the fetishist gardens of Asian curiosities at the Cape in the seventeenth century, an image that could be "bought" and "bartered" in mercantile exchange. It was, to continue the extended metaphor of Buddhologist and colonial agent of the British East-India Company in Nepal, Brian Hodgson, a souvenir "seized" as part of an expanding political and economic narrative of European domination in Asia. Once seized, Buddhism was reordered and rendered intelligible. In that reconstruction, asserted its author's, the "interminably sheer absurdities of the Buddha's philosophy or religion," was controlled.⁷

The "redemptive rescue" of a Buddhist canon found its way into Cape collections of material culture in the nineteenth century. For example, Wilhelm Hendrik Immanuel Bleek's 1862 catalogue of Sir George Grey's donation of books to the South African Library documents a "Siamese manuscript." This manuscript was accompanied by a cover-note written by Sir George suggesting that the Prince of Siam gave the document, "which related their religion," to Sir Robert McClure, who in turn gave it to Grey in 1861. The unnamed Siamese "manuscript," now lost, was one of two Buddhist texts donated to the Library. The other, a Burmese *upasampada* or ordination formulary, describes the *kathina* ceremony, the ritual offering of robes by the lay community to the monastic order. However, the interest in containing the texts of Buddhism, even at the Cape in the nineteenth century, was part of a wider, more general accumulation of Buddhist material culture in South Africa. In their capture and confinement, these texts became museumized objects. Conversely, material objects became texts to be indexed, catalogued, and interpreted.⁸

The convention of collecting and classifying Buddhist artifacts reached an apogee in the second half of the twentieth century, when Asian and Buddhist objects, including general chinserie, moved from the category of "Miscellaneous Natural and Human Collections," through "Human (rather

than Barbarous) Collections," to "Civilized (instead of Uncivilized) Collections" in the taxonomy of the South African Museum. By the end of the twentieth century, these objects finally came to reside in the "Historical and Antiquarian" (rather than the Ethnographic and Natural) collections of Buddhist culture encased in the Chinese, Japanese, and Tibetan rooms of the South African Cultural History Museum.⁹

Before documenting this development of Buddhism in South African museums, from a fantastic appeal as an exotic souvenir, to a nostalgic fetish of Asian travel, or a desacralized *objet d'art* in the systematized cabinets of timeless, frozen collection, I look more closely at the reinvention and reification of Buddhism in the textual lexicons of European and South African Orientalists and philologists. By exposing the impulses present in their comparisons in South Africa during the second half of the nineteenth century, I suggest that a South African association with Buddhism was consistent not only with its invention in the imagination of travellers who passed through the Cape on their way to or from Asia, nor only with its incarnation in the minds of readers who romanticized the "Buddhisms" reflected in those travelogues, but that Buddhism was appropriated, as a canonical, textual production, in the equally fictitious salvage of its construction in South African journals. Deprived of any local identity, other than that attributed to it by European scholarship, Buddhism was persistently denied originality.

As I will suggest, Buddhism was manipulated through two strategies for controlling that information: First, Buddhism was captured in texts that fixed that religion in terms of its origin and authenticity. Those texts provided a subsequent and compelling inventory that fascinated the Victorian imagination. Second, Buddhism was captured in exotic ritual objects. Those objects were then domesticated and desacralized in South African museums. As a result, Buddhism was subsumed in European attempts at interpretation.

Notably, those attempts occurred only when it was no longer possible to erase the presence of the religion from the imagination of an increasing number of inquirers. Nevertheless, the textual reification of Buddhism, deployed in order to serve the varied interests of Christian polemicists and the cultural mores of European scholars, raised important questions about doctrinal difference and the meaning of Buddhism in Asia. These were questions that reached, by common consent, their classic formulation in the published record of Eugene Burnouf.¹⁰

I. Textualizing Buddhism

Drawing on the "original" documents of the Sanskrit Buddhist "canon" that Brian Hodgson acquired in Nepal in 1824, and that he bequeathed to the Societie Asiatique in Paris, the French scholar Eugene Burnouf published in 1844 his *Introduction a l'histoire du Buddhisme Indien*. The volume was regarded as authoritative in South Africa during the second half of the nineteenth century. *Chamber's* encyclopaedia in 1874 argued that Burnouf's work was "the beginning of anything like correct information on the subject [of Buddhism] among the Western nations."¹¹

Because of Hodgson's remarkable journeys in Nepal - remarkable, not least, because that writer's interpretation of Buddhism was perhaps premised on interviews with a single informant - Burnouf primarily translated and edited the texts of the northern Mahayana Buddhist tradition. Those texts required a knowledge of Sanskrit. Earlier, in 1826, together with Christian Lassen, Burnouf began Pali studies, publishing an *Essai sur le Pali* in which he analyzed the texts of Siamese Theravadin Buddhism. As J. W. de Jong noted, however, the number of Pali manuscripts remained relatively few. This was the case at least up until the latter half of the 1870s, when a

significant upsurge in the editing and publishing of Theravadin texts occurred, particularly after 1881, when Thomas William Rhys Davids, a colonial administrator in Ceylon, who was forced to learn Pali and to translate the Theravadin *Vinaya* in order to mediate a dispute arising from the death of a *bhikkhu*, founded the Pali Text Society. Nevertheless, Sanskrit remained a fundamental requirement in the emerging textual construction of Buddhism in Europe. Sanskrit was necessary, Burnouf insisted, to "unveil" the truth of Buddhism.¹²

Friedrich Max Müller, the Indologist, philologist, and founder of comparative religion, did much to popularize the importance of Sanskrit in European scholarship. Drawing on the earlier formulation of William "Oriental" Jones, who hastened the science of comparative linguistics and legitimized the hypothesis that considered the language of the Vedas "more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either," Max Müller pointed out that the "history of religion is in one sense, a history of language." In a radical break that supplanted Ernest Renan's view that Semitic languages, especially Hebrew, should be viewed as the primordial root of the religious imagination, however, Max Müller suggested that in the Aryan tongues, foremost among them Sanskrit, the potential for myth was most prevalent. As Maurice Olender pointed out, however, Max Müller viewed the "science of language," or comparative philology, as occupying a strategic position among the sciences of the day. For example, Max Müller's desire to dig among "the roots of human speech," in search of the "essential elements of all religions," was seen as a quest consonant with Darwinian debate. Consequently, not only did Sanskrit offer the possibility of an original religious language for Max Müller, but Sanskrit was a model of *the confusion* or "disease of language" that was the *cause* and origin of divine personalities. Sanskrit was promoted in Europe,

therefore, as both an original language and an example of subsequent degeneration.¹³

As perhaps the primal language, Sanskrit was also used by students of philology in South Africa to delineate the originality and subsequent decay of religions at the Cape. For example, Theophilis Hahn, government philologist and warden of the Grey Collection in 1881, on the recommendation of Max Müller, who praised Hahn for learning the languages and the religions of the peoples of southern Africa without books, noted that the science of language, and the study of Sanskrit in particular, might afford students of religion in South Africa a chance to unravel the pre-historic religious condition of the Khoi. Hahn pointed out, however, that excursions into Asian languages, among them Japanese and Chinese, could not be conducted in order to "claim anthropological or ethnic relationship for the worshippers of Tsui//goab [a Khoi deity] and those of Buddha." A year earlier, in 1880, Professor James Gill of the department of classics at the Diocesan College in Cape Town wrote an article for the *Cape Monthly Magazine* in which he cited the authority of William Jones to suggest that Sanskrit did, however, throw light on the ethnology and migration of races in South Africa. "The study of Sanskrit, the sacred language of the Hindoo and the Buddhist was a key to unlock the sacred chambers of the languages of Europe and Africa." Sanskrit was the "common language that had given birth to all."¹⁴

Hahn and Gill were not alone among scholars of Sanskrit interested in an inventory of language in order to construct a textually reified analysis of religious origin or decay in South Africa. A number of amateur philologists and writers lived at the Cape in the 1880s, including the lawyer and writer P. M. Wynch, who in 1833 reported his membership of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta, and his friendship with William Jones, in a review of the latter's work in the *Cape of Good Hope Literary Gazette*. In what might seem like

the margin of a southern African imagining of Buddhism, in Butterworth, in the Eastern Cape, a writer for the *Blythswood Review* noted, in respect of Max Müller's thesis, that it was "impossible to go very far in any Eastern speculation without coming up against certain barriers of language, interpretation and thought." The idolatry of Buddhists and the "parabolism of the *Dhammapada*," however, "realize themselves so much in the language, customs, idolatries and Temple worship of India that they will not easily be overthrown by modern Science or by the scientific method" of linguistic study.¹⁵

It was not only language that was thought to provide the key to more scientific explorations of the origin of religion. Alongside a taxonomy of language lay a more essential requirement: textualization. Only within the confines of a literary text could the proof of religious originality and authenticity be evaluated. As Joseph Kitagawa and John S. Strong noted, Max Müller deemed that religions could be "divided into two classes, those which are founded on books, and those which have no such vouchers." Though Max Müller asserted that "religions do not live in books only," it was primarily the former class that were considered by many Orientalists, Indologists, and Buddhologists to be "real religions."¹⁶

To document and construct the truth of Buddhism, therefore, required not only an understanding of its language, but also access to the canonical books that afforded the linguist a "permanent and definite criteria" of evaluation; the possibility of distinguishing between what was "pure," "ancient," and "free from blemish," and what was "mythological crust," "afterthought," or the "lengthy lucubrations of ancient poets and prophets" that marked the "corruption of later years." The development of the Buddhist "canon," the *Tipitaka*, provided an excellent example of this dictum. As J. W. de Jong suggested of Burnouf's enterprise, however, it was necessary that

"Indian Buddhism had to be studied on the basis of [both] the Sanskrit *texts* from Nepal, and the Pali *texts* from Ceylon."¹⁷

Applying the same rules of analysis to Buddhism that emerged in biblical criticism, including the dating of original manuscripts; the historical reconstruction of canon; and the identification of authorship and redaction, two corresponding impulses emerged. First, a distinction was established between earlier, more orthodox Pali texts, and later, more heterodox Sanskrit writings. Barthelemy St-Hilaire, for example, drawing on the writings of such authorities as Hodgson, Wilson, Schmidt, Turnour, Burnouf, Foucaux, and Hardy, wanted to know, since "legends drowned realities in a mass of fabulous, excessive details," which of the two collections was the "more correct" and "original?" Only when delineated could the "exact value of the Buddhist canonical laws" be understood." Following Bigandet, most scholars by the end of the century concluded that it was the Pali.¹⁸

A corollary of this primacy of the Pali canon was the assumption that Theravadin practice was most original and orthodox. Sanskrit texts, more difficult to collect and collate in any coherent chronology, were viewed as degenerative. Mahayana Buddhism, consequently, was deemed a subsequent, more impure declension. As I pointed out, however, the perceived degeneracy of Sanskrit was not only linked to chronology. Mahayana Buddhism, particularly in Nepal and Tibet, was considered impure by Protestant writers who asserted that it was similar to Catholic practice.

A second impulse, however, was to view subsequent anthropological data that might interfere with this canonical precision as impertinent. In his *Hibbert Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion*, Max Müller devoted an entire chapter to discounting the uncritical acceptance of ethnological data in the work of perhaps the forerunner of the anthropological school of comparative religion, Charles de Brosses. Pursuing this line of attack against the work of Andrew Lang who, Max Müller argued, tried to explain Asian

mythology by analogical references to "Kafirs and Hottentots" in the Cape, he insisted that what was required was not ethnological data, but the "linguistic and genealogical" study of Asian texts.¹⁹

Reservations about ethnological data were reflected in the field of Buddhology quite specifically. Under the guise of ethnology, Hodgson's technique was to ask a reputable Buddhist scholar in Nepal a set of questions derived from Sanskrit texts in order to "try the truth of his quotations." Consequently, as David Gellner points out, his notes were dichotomized between "Buddhism as it is in Nepal" and "Buddhism as it ought to be [in Nepal]." Robert Spence Hardy, likewise, "spent hours, palm leaf in hand," talking to converted Buddhist monks in Ceylon so as to establish the discrepancies between the inerrancy of the objective text and the absurdities of his subjects. Though the *bhikkhu* "almost universally repudiated" a number of central Buddhist doctrines, including *anatta*, Hardy noted, "when it was pointed out to them in their own sacred books, they were obliged to acknowledge that it was a tenet of their religion."²⁰

Similarly, Bigandet complained that his informants were unreliable since their interpretations differed from the Burmese canon that he carried. The result, reflected in Alabaster's 1871 translation of the *Life of Buddha*, ironically gleaned, the writer suggested, "from Siamese sources by a modern Buddhist," was that ethnological *difference* was excised in Western redaction. "Cut out," the "confused" "tediousness" of verbal evidence was replaced by a text more concise and "correct." Even if, as J. Barthelemy St-Hilaire argued, fresh discoveries were made, these discoveries would not change the opinions that were already frozen in the canon of sacred Buddhist texts. Textuality, rather than actuality, became the measure of Buddhist truth, so much so that the monastic dispute that led Rhys Davids to pursue a study of Pali remained unresolved because, as the colonial administrator noted, the

texts of the *Vinaya Pitaka* contained "no rules regarding the mode of treating the body of a deceased *bhikkhu*."²¹

Fixed in a transcript recovered by redemptive European redaction, and indexed against this textuality in the publication of a palm-leaf that, as Rhys Davids noted, had remained "buried and unpublished," the initial romance or fear of Buddhism was replaced by its textual fixation. As was the case with the census, and with later material cabinets, the innate disorder and conjectured diffusion that Buddhism suggested was isolated or erased at a time when Christianity fought to maintain internal coherence in the light of biblical criticism. In turn, this object, an invention as imaginative as the traveller's denial, provided the measure for more systematic definition, description, and classification, both in Europe and at the Cape of Good Hope.²²

In spite of the emergence of Buddhism as textually visible and available to the gaze of nineteenth-century readers, the possibility that Buddhism could still exist as an exile to the category of religion or humanity remained. So too did the perennial comparative reflexes that were employed by travellers a century or more earlier. Readers of the popular Protestant review magazine, the *Oriental Herald and Journal of General Literature*, for example, read in 1826 of the Catholic missionary Xavier's ejection from Japan and, therefore, of the assumed iniquity of Japanese Buddhists.

II. Classifying Buddhism

Suggesting that Japanese Buddhists had no books, no art, and no civilization, the reviewer of the *Oriental Herald and Journal of General Literature* focussed on the supposed barbarism, demonstrated by their outlawing of Christianity, of the "heathen pagans" of Japan. "The burning of a few half-

starved Jews or heretics," the polemicist argued, was nothing compared to persecutions of Catholic Christians by Japanese Buddhists.

As the magistrates were very sparing of wood, which is somewhat scarce in that country, the bodies of the martyrs were roasted rather than burned; which circumstance was turned to a singular account, for, as the executioners and the crowd retired from the field at night-fall, the Christians immediately repaired thither in the darkness, and brought away all the flesh that could be taken from the bodies of the priests, to be preserved as relics.

Whether in fact this event reflected Japanese iniquity and Christian faith, or Christian perversity and Buddhist perseverance, the reviewer eventually concluded that the Buddhists were not entirely unjustified. After all, Catholic Jesuits, "being partial to candle-light," turned their tapers to a different use by setting fire to the "pagan pagodas." The writer concluded, somewhat pragmatically,

But whatever be the deities men may happen to worship, there are few who would be pleased to see their temples set on fire by the priests of a foreign country and another religion; more particularly if these pious men proceed to such extremities before they have rendered themselves masters of the country. It should be a rule with those who think the destruction of other religions necessary, to subdue the people first, and then burn their temples and their gods - for the gods of the vanquished country may almost always be burned with impunity, although it is not an easy matter without previous conquest.²³

Advancing an anti-Catholic invective, the reviewer in this Protestant journal nonetheless admitted that Buddhism was essentially incompatible with any available taxonomy of religion. Consequently, Buddhists were to be considered both barbarous and absurd. Buddhism was not a religion but a fiery "inflammation of the imagination." Leading international authorities picked up these threads to direct a chorus of insult against Buddhism. As Von Hartman suggested, Buddhism was an "absolute illusion," an "imaginative self-absorption." A "conglomeration of superstitions" argued Burnouf; "interminable sheer absurdities" noted Hodgson; "neither a religion nor a philosophy," suggested St-Hilaire. Buddhism was an "incomplete psychology;" a "tissue of dreams;" a "mass of fabulous and excessive details" in which "all aberrations and all follies became possible." It was a "hideous system" from which it would be an error to expect any order that was "methodological and regular."²⁴

Transposing his own ignorance onto that of his Sinhalese informer, Robert Spence Hardy similarly argued that Buddhism was "a phantom formed in the brain of ascetics musing under the palm-trees of the Orient." He continued, stressing that these ascetics "note down dreams and, attaching to them names," called this religion Buddhism. Likewise, citing as his authority Robert Knox's *Account of the Island of Ceylon*, Robert Percival, we recall, reported that the Sinhalese were ignorant of religious sentiment. They were susceptible to a crazy superstition that could be "attributed to the climate in which they live." And in China, some thirty years later, Gützlaff reported that it was because of the adverse conditions of "ice fields in the north or rice fields in the south" that the Chinese followed this "hydra of superstition" rather than purer forms of Protestant religion.²⁵

These vaguely scientific, meteorological, and geographic mechanisms of interpretation were also reflected in South African journals. In the *Cape Monthly Magazine* for 1860, Alfred W. Cole, along with Roderick Noble, a

professor of physical chemistry at the South African College and, perhaps not surprisingly, author of a text in a similar vein entitled *Geology, its Relation to Sacred Scripture*, reviewed the work of Gützlaff. Because the Chinese were "faggots of contradiction," both "asinine" and "amphibious," living as happily on land as in the water, Cole and Noble proposed, they could not help but have no coherent religion. Having concluded that Buddhism was not a religion, however, Cole and Noble compared Buddhism to Roman Catholicism by reporting that priests in a Shanghai Buddhist temple, that contained "four great pictures of Buddha," spent their days "intoning and chanting a monotonous sort of sleepy Gregorian chant" that reminded the authors of "Catholicism in Genoa and other Italian towns."²⁶

Exclusion from the taxonomy of religion was not always as straightforward as that employed by the nineteenth-century apologist or the South African geologist. As we have seen, the contours of a denial of Buddhism were seldom contrived only in terms of the frequently indistinct lacuna of the barbarous and pagan, or the confused and insane. As colonial encounters with Otherness increased and "scientific" practices of the division, segmentation, and subclassification of religion expanded, Buddhism was appropriated and manipulated in new classificatory paradigms. These paradigms were crystalized most frequently into two recurring questions, first, whether Buddhism was a philosophy or a religion and, second, if Buddhism was a religion, whether it was to be considered "atheist," "pantheist," or "polytheist?"

J. Barthelemy St-Hilaire was unsure as to whether Buddhism might better be considered a philosophy rather than a religion. Monier Monier-Williams suggested the possibility, however, that since Buddhism offered "no God, no Supreme Being, no real prayer, no real clergy," and "lay no claim to any supernatural revelation," it might be more correctly considered a philosophy. As to whether, contingent on its salvaged textualization,

Buddhism ought to have been inscribed as theistic rather than pantheistic or polytheistic, however, Eugene Burnouf noted that "great nations in the East, of the same race as ourselves," among them the Buddhists of Siam, "still worshipped Greek and Roman gods," and in a manner "which in many respects resembles Christianity," these Asian Buddhists "collected those same divinities into a sort of pantheon." Whoever regarded Buddhism as atheistic or materialistic, therefore, surely forgot that "pantheism is the foundation of that religion."²⁷

Understandably, a reviewer of Robert Spence Hardy's account of Buddhism in China, which was appended to a narrative of the Catholic missionary Huc's travels in that country and published in the first volume of the *South African Church Magazine and Ecclesiastical Review*, was somewhat confused. Asserting that Buddhism was a "diabolical caricature" of religion, the reviewer followed Hardy in classifying it as atheist, but added that Buddhism could also be regarded as pantheist. Likewise, in an extract from the French journal *Revue Trimestrielle*, the *Oriental Herald* for 1828 informed Cape readers that the Buddhist concept of Nirvana, although not a doctrine of annihilation, was consistent with the "nothingness" implied in the "pantheist notion of an absolute Being." This pantheism, suggested the reviewer, placed Buddhism in the same category as the "Brahmins of the school of the Veduanta, the Stons, Strofees, the most learned of the Musulmans, and some modern sects of the West."²⁸

Confusion as to the exact position of Buddhism on the scale of religion or theism continued. Max Müller suggested that "if religion is meant to be a bridge between the visible and the invisible, between the temporal and the eternal, between the human and the divine," then "true Buddhism would be no religion at all; for it knows nothing invisible, nothing eternal; it knows no God, in our sense of the word." In 1900 Thomas William Rhys Davids reiterated this theistic denial. However, giving credence to a South

Africa reviewer's understanding of Buddhism in 1853 as pantheistic, Rhys Davids noted that Buddhism was collectively a "pantheistic or monotheistic unity which evolved out of the chaos of polytheism - which is itself a modified animism or animistic polydaemonism." Russian Buddhologist Fyodore Stcherbatsky, as late as 1930, and in a decidedly Kantian reading, compounded confusion by insisting that Buddhism was a "radical monism."²⁹

This theistic taxonomy was as fluid as it was confused. But it was a taxonomy that continued to register in South African attempts at religious classification. For example, the taxonomy appeared in a 1924 paper on the "Animism of the Bantu," a paper that was published six years prior to Stcherbatsky's *magnum opus*, his two-volume work, *Buddhist Logic*. Reverend A. Louw argued that Buddhism was in theory "an atheistic religion, yet in practice it was a polytheistic atheism." Therefore, Buddhism was a confused system. However, an understanding of Buddhism was necessary, the Reverend Louw suggested, for an interpretation of indigenous African religion in southern Africa.³⁰

The possibility of arresting the document of Buddhism by placing it into one of these categories - either paganism or religion; either theism, atheism, polytheism, or pantheism - was not only contingent on internal, nineteenth-century modes of intellectual discipline, textualization, and analysis. Questions about the possible subjectivity of Buddhism also remained contracted to interests that mirrored the seventeenth and eighteenth-century African romance. They perpetuated concerns raised in these earlier Cape encounters with Asian alterity. If Buddhism was a religion, was it original? If it was not original, was it a corrupted form of early Christianity? Or was it a degenerate form of some other religious or philosophical tradition? Questions about the authenticity or duplicity of Buddhism, therefore, continued to be accounted for in terms of a denial of its subjectivity or an invention of its aberrance. For nineteenth-century

commentators, these transgressions were most persistently perceived in terms that reflected a continuity with earlier travel accounts of an idolatrous connection between Buddhism and Catholicism.

An account of the London Missionary Society's initial mission in Mongolia, first published in 1847 in Cape Town by John Crombie Brown in his work entitled *First-Fruits of a Mission to Siberia by the Revs. Messrs. Yuille, Stallybrass and Swan, Agents of the London Missionary Society*, for example, noted that the Tibetan Buddhist "servants of the Dalai Lama," who during the 1820s began to convert "idolatrous" Mongolians in Siberia, were considered by the local population to be "living gods." According to the missionaries, however, it was more appropriate to regard Buddhist lamas as servants of the Catholic Pope. Moreover, although both Buddhism and Shamanism were deemed to be the idolatrous work of Satan, the lamas of Tibet were considered doubly Satanic since, from a certain Protestant perspective, they bore such a marked resemblance to Catholicism. As William Swan wrote somewhat prosaically in 1827:

Though the Shaman neither book nor bead
 Employs, a letter'd though not better class -
 The Lamas - now oppose his mystic creed.
His gods were sheep-skin; theirs cloth, wood, or brass
 And as in figure, so in power surpass
 Their predecessors - and to them they bow,
 And sprinkle holy water, to amass
 A fund of merit, wherewith to endow
 Their souls! Say, Papist! who the mimic - they or thou?³¹

In spite of the accounts of travellers or philologists who argued that Buddhism was a form of corrupted Christianity, some writers did lend independence to the tradition. Buddhism was not so much "idolatrous

Papism" as it was a creed, "more primitive and more original," suggested a reviewer for the *Cape Monthly Magazine* in 1846, "than Christianity." The development of the "Christian Civilization" could not be studied, moreover, without referring to the influences on it of "the Egyptian, Assyrian, Indian and Chinese." And although the influence of "Buddhism on Western nations cannot now be, and perhaps never will be, duly traced," this reviewer concluded, it must nevertheless have been an "ancient connection."³²

That connection, however, was one that many reviewers thought compromised Christianity. An essay on the comparison between Buddhism and Christianity that appeared in the Eastern Cape journal the *Christian Express* of 1886 suggested that the association denied the "divine origin of our faith." The reviewer continued by noting that "the rise of Buddhism as a protest against Brahmanism in India is a very remarkable event in the religious history of the human race and worthy of the attentive study of all Christians." Resemblances to Christianity, however, were "too superficial to bear examination," Therefore, Buddhism did not originate in Bethlehem but in Banares, in India.³³

Recognition of a Hindu origin for Buddhism was hindered by the appeal to Jewish roots. "Would it not be more rational to argue," continued the reviewer in the 1886 *Christian Express*, "that as Christianity is the development of the Mosaic revelation, so Buddhism may have derived what is excellent in its system from the same source?" Six years earlier, although still some fifty years after Swan sang that Tibetan Buddhism was a form of "Mosaic economy," the same South African journal repeated this genealogy. Noting that Buddhism was indeed an ancient religion, dating back to "well within a thousand years of the flood," the collections of *suttas*, or "hymns," that the reviewer named, incorrectly, as the Hindu "Vedas," and termed erroneously as the "Buddhist decalogue," were thought to have been "handed down from the immediate descendents of Noah." These texts were

predictably viewed as "corrupted in each succeeding age, until the organization became a system of debasing polytheism."³⁴

Most South African accounts denied that Buddhism was original by tracing that religion to a Christian or Jewish genesis. A reviewer in the *South African Church Magazine and Ecclesiastical Review* noted in 1853 that the Christian prototype was "not a matter of controversy." The connection between "Judaism or early Christianity; with the Pythagoreans or the Manichees; with the Nestorian Tartars, or Franciscan Missionaries [was] one of those obvious facts." Framed in this Christian genealogy, the "essence" of Buddhism remained degenerate. The same writer argued that Buddhism was "a mass of trickery," a "mixture of sense and religion with credulity, imposture, and connivance at imposture."³⁵

Not merely inauthentic, Buddhism, for some commentators, was actually Satanic. Sir Thomas Herbert's assertion that Japanese "bonzes" worshipped at a temple where "Satan oft-times made his appearance," persisted. A correspondent for *The South African Christian Recorder* in 1836 noted that the Chinese, in search of an incarnate savior, were "fatally misled by the Satanic stratagem" of Buddhists just as Buddhists were deceived by the "Satanic strategies" of Catholic missionaries. "Coming from India," and "announcing an incarnate God," the Buddhists were taken to be disciples of Christ. "Thus was this religion introduced into China and thus did this phantasmagoria of hell intercept the light of the true gospel." Throughout the nineteenth century, writers at the Cape continued to articulate a demonization of Buddhism. In 1880 William Thompson cited Asia as the birth-place of "Brahmanism, of Buddhism, and of Confucianism;" of the "followers of the man of Mecca;" and, most significantly for the Protestant missionary, of "Satan's seat." However, as Max Müller asked in 1891, what explanations remained if "the similarities between Buddhism and Christianity must not be explained by the wiles of the Tempter?" There were, he decided, only two

possibilities: "Either, one of these two religions borrowed from the other, or the similarities between them must be traced back to that common foundation which underlies all religions." However, for many Protestant commentators, the works of Satan continued to represent the common foundation of any other religion, including Buddhism.³⁶

Outside of Christian genealogy or Satanic denial, the origin of Buddhism was most frequently traced to its Indian Hindu roots. Although Edward Upman admitted that there was no great clarity as to its independence, he noted that this "primitive religion" could be regarded as an "offshoot" of a "Hindoostan Brahmanic faith." The essentially correct opinion was blurred, however, when Upman linked Buddhism with African and European religions. Exotic "Buddhist Vishnoo pagodas" in Ceylon were comparable to the more familiar temples "of Egypt or the Cyclopean structures" of the Greco-Roman world. In the light of Upman's morphology a reviewer in the 1829 edition of the *Oriental Herald and Journal of General Literature* concluded that Buddhism might have originated from "Pythagorean" doctrines or might have been "grafted upon the same stock that furnished the brilliant conceptions of the Greeks."³⁷

The Catholic missionary Huc, however, whose travels were reviewed in South Africa in the 1850s, pursued the Hindu descent of Buddhism. Convinced of this origin in a remarkable way the missionary even went so far as to pretend that he was an ancient Brahmin of Rome, a Brahmin older than those of India. Wearing a saffron robe, hanging tiger-skins from his shoulders, and smearing sandalwood on his forehead in the manner of Hindu mendicants, Huc attempted to embody this historical construct so that, as a writer for the *South African Church Magazine and Ecclesiastical Review* noted in 1853, the Buddhist Tartars would think him "a Lama from the West from where they imagine all religious knowledge comes." Ten years earlier, however, William Swan also informed his South African readers that "India

is the source from whence your Lama superstition has proceeded," describing a Tibetan Buddhist ritual in Mongolia in 1843 as the cultic practice of a Hindu "Juggernaut." Similarly, in 1836 the reviewer of Taylor's *History of Muhammadanism* in the *South African Christian Recorder*, argued that India was "the unhappy parent" not only of Buddhism, but of a "monstrous combination of animals" including "Gnosticism, Alexandrian Idealism, Sufism and Zoroastrianism." Buddhism and the religions of Africa, Arabia, and ancient Persia thus "contain internal evidence of having been originally one and the same."³⁸

While most commentators turned to the precision of comparative philology to assess Buddhism's origin and subsequent, uncanonical declension, attempts to salvage an accurate history were reported in other scientific disciplines. For example, developing technologies of comparative geology, and even art, were used by some interpreters to reveal the "truth" of Buddhism. In South Africa, as I will indicate, Buddhism was classified according to archaeological comparisons that outlined similarities between Tswana religion and the material remnants of Buddhist reliquary. Rock art was also used as an example of apparent continuities between San and Asian Buddhist iconography in Africa. However, most scholars persisted with the view that, if the truth of Buddhism was to be accurately defined, precise philological investigation was necessary. Without this aid, and ignorant of the languages of Sanskrit or Pali, wild, undisciplined comparisons would persist. Consequently, failing to account for linguistic diffusion would perpetuate earlier, bizarre interpretations. Comparisons with South African religions in the absence of philology and concomitant textuality, for example, would possibly make Buddhism appear more African than Aryan.

III. Finding the Founder

The inability to view Buddhism as an independent and authoritative tradition was matched by a corresponding uncertainty about the genealogical authenticity of the founder of Buddhism. Although as early as 1690 Engelbert Kaempfer, a physician to the Dutch Embassy at the Japanese court, and one of the first travellers to provide anything like an accurate account of Japanese Buddhism, traced the origins of Gautama the Buddha to India, it was only by the late 1840s that India was generally accepted as the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama and the locus of the emergence of Buddhism. Again, Burnouf gave the definitive statement. Based on textual analysis, the French Buddhologist noted that the Buddhist *sutras* in Tibet, Tartary, and China were translations of Sanskrit texts that "restored to India and to its language the study of a religion and a philosophy of which India was the birthplace."³⁹

Indian originality, however, remained confusing, a matter compounded by the question of the existence of Buddhas prior to Gautama. In a review of Upman's work, a writer for the *Oriental Herald* queried if the historical Buddha was in fact, as Upman argued, the ninth avatar of Vishnu. As late as 1854, a contributor to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defined "Buddhu" as "one of the two appearances of Vishnu," an appearance assumed in order to "reject the Hindu religion." However, in 1874, in the Eastern Cape, a reviewer in the journal the *Kaffir Express* was able to confront and explain this confusion. On what must seem the periphery of events concerned with the salvage of Buddhist originality, the author of this article noted, in both English and Xhosa, and mediated through Protestant anti-Catholic invective, that "Buddhism, arising by a reaction against

Brahmanism, is the counterpart in the East of Protestantism, as a recoil from Roman Catholicism, in the West."⁴⁰

One of the more bizarre consequences of the quest for an aetiology of the Buddha, however, was found in attempts to situate the historical Buddha not in India, but in Africa. The Orientalist William Jones was the first scholar in the English-speaking world to argue for this seemingly unlikely genealogy. Jones argued that the Sakyan sage, called Sa cya or Si sak, "either in person or through a colony from Egypt," imported the "mild heresy of the ancient Buddhas" into India. Jones justified this finding, as the botanist Carl Pehr Thunberg had done, by referring to the "African" features of the Buddha in iconography. In Ceylon, Robert Percival also noted this similarity. "Buddou is always represented," he remarked, "with thick, black frizzled hair like an African Negro." Having visited the Indian caves at Elephanta, William Francklin drew the same African connection. 1823

His woolly and frizzled hair, thick lips and Herculean form, are cogent reasons for believing this shape of the divinity to have been of foreign importation. The aquiline or straight nose forms one objection to the generally received opinion of his being copied from the European or African negro.... The coincidence, in the sculptured details of Egypt, Persia, and the Hindoostan, are everywhere perceptible, and seem to have had one common origin.⁴¹

The Black Buddha was even to be seen in China. The three Buddhas of the past, present, and future, wrote Gützlaff in the popular *Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal Journal*, were "often represented in colossal forms, with negro features, curled hair dyed a light blue, thick lips, and flat broad noses." John Davy was skeptical, however. Although some scholars traced the origin of the Buddha's birthplace to Ethiopia, showing many statues of "Boodhoo as

an African, having marked on them the short woolly hair, the flat dilated nostrils, the thick fleshy lips, and indeed every feature of the African countenance," these resemblances were, he felt, unconvincing.⁴²

However, the image of the African Buddha persisted in South African scholarship. In an inquiry into the presence of African physiognomy in Asia, delegates at a congress of the Suid-Afrikaanse Buro vir Rasse-Aangeleenthede in 1956 learned from a paper on "The Asian in Africa," by J. P. Bruwer, that "die swart Boeddha van Indie gegiet is in die fisiese gestalte van die Negroïde (the black Buddha of India originated in the physical image of the Negroid)." Drawing upon Massey's *A Book of the Beginnings*, published in 1881, and on Du Bois' *Les negritos de la Chine*, Bruwer concluded that the founder of Buddhism could be traced to Africa.⁴³

In addition to comparative physiology, comparative philology, despite the warnings of Burnouf and Max Müller, also produced strange findings about the Buddha. In 1788, for example, William Chambers argued that a plausible relation could be forged between Buddha and the Scandinavian deity, Woden. According to Chambers,

Pout, which among the Siamese is another name for *Sommonakhodom* is itself a corruption of Buddhou, who is the *Mercury* of the Greeks. And it is singular that according to La Loubere, the mother of *Sommonakhodom* is called in *Balic* [Pali] *Maha-Mania*, or the *Great Mania*, which resembles the name of *Maia*, the mother of *Mercury*. At the same time the *Tumulic* termination *en*, which renders the word *Pooden*, creates the resemblance between this and the *Woden* of the Gothic nations.⁴⁴

By 1821, however, John Davy convincingly refuted the identification of Buddha with Thor, Odin, or any of the other deities of the Scandinavians.

"What analogies are there between the Boodhaical, and the Scandinavian systems?" he asked. "The points of resemblance, if any, are certainly very few, whilst those of dissimilitude are innumerable."⁴⁵

Attempts at salvaging a textually reified history of Buddhism, and a history of its founder, did not merely occur in physiological and philological inquiry. These attempts were also mediated by the developing technologies of comparative geology and even by the history of art. Both sciences were reflected in the writings of South African Orientalists, many of whom pursued the argument for an African Buddhist genealogy. These "scientific" disciplines were also employed to advance a reciprocal interest, one in which Buddhism could conceivably provide an origin for the religions of southern Africa. For example, William Charles Willoughby, a tutor in comparative religion at a "Native Institution" called Tiger Kloof, in the Northern Cape, followed the lead of Roderick Noble to argue that comparative geology offered insights into the shared history and religious identity of Sotho-Tswana scholars in Africa, and Buddhists in Asia. "*The Soul of Bantu Nature Worship*," wrote Willoughby, could be detected in sandstone imprints in Bechuanaland of a "one-legged god" called Loowe. That African footprint, Willoughby observed, was similar to the "two footprints of Buddha in the little temple of Bodh Gaya." Therefore, Africans and Buddhists shared a common mythology that was reinforced in the geology of religions.⁴⁶

The reinterpretation of South African religious history in terms of Buddhist idiom was arrested further in the comparison of analogous artistic production. Francis Flemming, a missionary and traveller in the Cape in the mid-nineteenth-century, alluded to this linkage when accounting for the peculiar similarity between San "Bushman" paintings and Chinese art. According to Flemming, the similarity suggested a common descent. In 1911 a finding of even greater peculiarity, but a peculiar confusion of center and periphery that we have perhaps come to expect, was put forward by the

missionary James McKay. Not only did San and Chinese paintings suggest the possibility of a common origin, but, as McKay argued,

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The Bushmen's assertion that their paintings were intended as embellishments of the caves, which were designed not as caves but as places of worship, probably proves this custom to have been inherited from Buddhist ancestors in East Africa, who would seem to have been a mixture of Egyptian and Chinese.⁴⁷

The confusion that assertions like these inaugurated, by arguing either that Buddhism originated in Africa or that South African religions originated in Buddhist lands, was predicated as much on a continuing sense of disorientation at the presence of Buddhism in an African periphery as it was on the confusing procedures of nineteenth-century academic discipline. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, southern African interpretations of Buddhism were conventional. Even as an absence, Buddhism appeared in reflections on religious diversity. In 1842 the missionary Robert Moffat, like the naturalist Thunberg a half-century earlier, argued that the "devilish Tswana," not unlike the San Bushmen, the Khoi, and all other Africans, evidenced "no fragment of religion" because Satan "erased" every vestige of "the horrors which are to be found in countries where idols and idol temples are resorted to by millions of devotees." African religion, therefore, could be understood in Moffat's terms as an absence of the "idolatry" found in Buddhism and other Asian religions.⁴⁸

The South African missionary Thomas Arbousset, however, thought that Satan was perhaps not as thorough as Moffat intimated. "An apologue of Confucius has been preserved amongst them," he argued. Similarly, John Campbell's account of the peoples of the Eastern Frontier manipulated a simile of Chinese identity to evaluate the religion of the Xhosa. Henry

Callaway thought that belief in evil spirits among Zulu-speakers in Natal, however, was similar to the corrupted Siamese *talapoin* or monastic belief that Bigandet, whose work Callaway used in a description of Zulu religion, suggested was present in the worship of Burmese Nats. In 1929 R. C. Samuelson pointed out, therefore, that a Zulu "superstition" concerning the divine number three was consistent with Buddhist "trinitarian" numerology, including the "Buddha, Anna Sonsja, and Rosia Sonsja," the three "idols" seen in Buddhist temples in Siam.⁴⁹

As a supplement to this focus on apparent analogies between African religions and Buddhism, comparisons using Hinduism were also introduced. In 1945, for example, government ethnologist A. T. Bryant "renewed acquaintance once more in the Bushman religious system (though not all of them together on the spot)" by employing Hindu "trinitarianism." "Thus, Uwu (like Brahman), was a creator; Huwe (like Vishnu), a good spirit; and //Gaua (like Shiva), an evil spirit." These analogies also persisted. In 1993 the South African archaeologist Cyril Hromnick argued, on the basis of a rereading of travel documents and material artifacts, that the weapons depicted in San rock-art pointed to earlier contacts between Dravidian and southern African societies. Insisting on a more pervasive influence than that previously forwarded by the historian Boxer, for example, Hromnick suggested that the religious beliefs of Hindus influenced the sacred symbolisms of the San. Whereas the ethnologist Bryant noted that Shiva was equivalent to the evil god //Gaunab, however, Hromnick argued that the Hindu deva was an alias of the San ancestor-hero, Heibi-Eibib.⁵⁰

While earlier analogies were mobilized because of increased familiarity consequent on travel or Christian missions in Asia, or on the presence of Buddhists in Africa, these subsequent comparisons were the result of more scientific forms of analysis. Many such interpretations and comparisons appeared in the satiety of journal literature that was available to

readers in South Africa and that inscribed Buddhism in more accurate if not intelligible analogies. In these "sciences" of comparative philology and physiognomy, or geology and archaeology, or art and architecture, Africa continued to be one of many confusing origins of Buddhism and one of a multiplicity of points of degeneration for the historical Buddha. Alongside genealogy, however, the complementary search for the inner workings of this tradition also emerged in South African journals.

IV. Inventory of Ideas

Central to the exposure of Buddhism were interpretations of the Buddhist concept of self, including the teachings of *anatta*, literally no-self, no-soul, or nonsubstance; *pratityasamutpada*, translated as dependent coorigination or causality; Karma, literally, action; and Nirvana. Since European students of comparative religion "captured" Buddhism, as an inert and a textually reified object, the Buddhist understanding of the self, as *anatta*, for example, was correspondingly considered to be evidence of the quietism and inactivity of that religion. The presumed absence of an adequate motive for action in Buddhism was considered lamentable, however, as Douglas Brear pointed out, primarily because it conflicted with Victorian cultural mores of individualism and social action.⁵¹

The related notion of *pratityasamutpada*, not only a licence for inertia, was reviewed as illogical, "an indefensible hypothesis, which the Buddha doubtless did not invent, but which he accepted, and from which he drew the most deplorable conclusions," wrote St-Hilaire. "Transmigration," as the term was often translated, was "repugnant to all the instincts of human nature" and "revolting to reason." Therefore, Buddhism was "a sad and soulless system," suggested a reviewer in the South African *Christian*

Express: "it knows nothing of spiritual life and joy," and its fate is "annihilation." The Buddhist notion of Karma, moreover, was thought to be the "least logical or conclusive" of all philosophical thought concerning the Self. Karma, in fact, was absurd, for it presumed predestination. Indeed, "the original character of Buddhism," wrote Max Müller, "could not be freed from the charge of Nihilism if *tested by its own canonical books*."⁵²

The charge of insubstantiality, of ill-logic, was a mechanism that absolved European attempts to grapple with religious difference and pluralism. That charge also congregated, as Guy Welbon argued, around the central question of the meaning of Nirvana. As we recall, Gui Tachard informed Cape readers that the Buddhist Paradise in Siam, called "nyruppaam (Nirvana)," while like the "perfect bliss of heaven," was not entirely analogous to Catholic doctrine. The idea of Nirvana was consonant, he argued, with a belief in "God's annihilation." This seemingly hopeless theological lacuna continued for much of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The *Oriental Herald* of 1828, for example, suggested that, "like the Pantheists," the Buddhist notion of "Chakia-Mouni's" teaching on Nirvana, although not entirely a dogma of annihilation, was nevertheless one "that favoured inaction." *The Kaffir Express* of 1874, however, accumulatively insisted that Buddhism in the Eastern Cape was

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[atheistic, materialistic, proposes annihilation as the goal of human desire, leaves the mass of its votaries in the practice of the grossest idolatry, has nothing to show that God has ever accepted its worship, and has not succeeded in purifying and ennobling man, and bringing him back to God.⁵³

Annihilation or not, a reviewer in the 1853 edition of the *South African Church Magazine and Ecclesiastical Review* contended that Buddhist soteriology was "certainly difficult to make out." However, while much of

Chinese Buddhism was similar to aspects of Christianity in mediaeval Rome, the "mass of trickery" implicated in the notion of Nirvana, the reviewer suggested, came closest to resembling the Hindu's "absorption into a kind of divinity, which was a sort of subjugation in grotesque and heterogeneous superstructures."⁵⁴

Although some students of comparative religion and philology pursued an interpretation of Buddhist ideas based on comparable religious concepts, many South Africans who were confronted with the strangeness of Buddhism continued to associate that religion with an atheistic annihilation. When asked by his Zulu-speaking informant Mabaso which of the world religions most closely approached his own, for example, the colonial administrator James Stuart confessed that, while the Romans relied on agricultural deities; and the Egyptians believed, like the Zulu, in worshipping cattle, "Buddhism was annihilation." "In what sense then," contributed the "English-Kaffir" journal, the *Kaffir Express*, "can Buddhism ever become the rival of Christianity!" Since "fate rules all, and it supplies no energy in time," posited the *Christian Express*, how could Buddhism ever hope to "build up a civilization at all to compare with the truth of Christianity" and the Christian gospel?⁵⁵

Whatever the origin of Buddhism, or whatever the declension of the historical Buddha, whether judged according to a Catholic correlation, African art, or Hindu inception; whether salvaged as a geological impression, or premised on the firmer legacy of linguistic textuality, Buddhism was distinguished by the promise of dangerous contagion. If not original, if absurd, degenerate, or just nihilist, Buddhism was of consequence, as Upman noted, and as South African reviewers were aware, for its great number of adherents. Indeed, far from being benign, or inconsequential, Buddhism was thought important primarily because it was numerically ominous. Buddhism was something to be revealed and exhibited,

surely, but it was also something to be controlled in the confines of textual restraint and order rather than given latitude in unbridled substantiality.

In this respect, the salvage of Buddhism in the nineteenth century, and its increased invention in southern Africa in the first decades of the twentieth, was informed by the requirement of arrest. As one writer for the Eastern Cape journal the *Christian Express* in 1899 outlined, "the new science of religion" contributed a vast amount of knowledge concerning the "faiths of non-Christian peoples." Although this science revealed that religion was "everywhere at some stage" of development, the study of "comparative religion [was] dangerous to the Christian thinker." In response to that danger, the reviewer advised,

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The student of comparative religion in South Africa must approach the study of heathen religions and civilizations in the spirit of the writer to the Hebrews - in the spirit of sympathetic appreciation, and yet desirous of leading [people] from the old to the new, from the star-light of heathen faith to the sunlight of Christianity.

"We may name Buddha the Saviour of the world," or, in the words of Edwin Arnold, as "all honored, wisest, best, and pitiful; the Teacher of Nirvana, and the Law," concluded the reviewer, "but in naming Buddha or any other by such a name we are speaking in a language of poetic fiction and not of actual fact.... Apart from Christ no one can be saved."⁵⁶

There were intimations that the comparative study of religion, and of the study of Buddhism in particular, might provide resources for hope rather than fear. The reviewer for an English-Xhosa monthly at Lovedale in the mid-1870s, echoing Max Müller's argument, suggested that there were only two religions of consequence: Buddhism and Christianity. But "in the encouragement of free inquiry into the foundations of belief" in both

religions, he queried, "perhaps there may arise out of the conflict between them a religion purer than either, which will be the religion of the future."⁵⁷

For the most part, however, this interest, this romance, with Buddhism in South African journals remained contracted to fear. Buddhism was not something to be disseminated and discussed as a possible or Promethean good but something that demanded to be displaced. Fear of contagion, as I suggested, revolved continually around a consequent fascination. These dual impulses, fascination and fear, were mobilized not only in textual convention, however. They were also manifest in collections of Asian and Buddhist material culture. Along with literary journals, therefore, museums presented Buddhism to a southern African audience.

Fixed in the museum, in the convention that Duncan Cameron and Carol Duncan identified as the twentieth-century parody of the temple, Buddhism persisted as less a living religious tradition of the present, however, than as an object of art from the past, a commodification of Asian exoticism, decline, and aberrance for which the museum became guardian. Caught in inanimate display, as it was in the authority of textuality, Buddhism was denied any form of history, any chance of subjectivity. Sacralized in this shrine to colonial expansionism, domination, and collation, Buddhism became caught up in procedures of profanation and ritual negation. As part of what Benedict Anderson called the "pictorial census of the state's patrimony," therefore, Buddhism was reinvested with sacrality only insofar as it was deemed part of the processes of expanding colonialism in Asia, of which South Africa, by virtue of its geographic position, was a part.⁵⁸

V. Collection of Objects

Collections of Asian culture in South African museums, like travelogues, documented the imagined, romantic "wildness" of Buddhism. But in a quest for the salvage of what appeared as a degeneration of Buddhism, the collation of Buddhist material artifacts domesticated this aberrance. Thus the collection, as pastiche, as a melange of plunder, was an articulation both of fantastic imagination and self-reflective fear. Consecrating social order, making contingencies appear fixed and eternal in what Mieke Bal called a "semiotic charge of environment," museum collections in South Africa operated as documents of the custodianship and salvage of the exotic and as instruments of paradox; they were mirrors that reflected or duplicated self-interest and displayed the objects and artifacts of the subject duplicitously. In these ways, collections of material objects were both products of accumulation and agents of social signification.⁵⁹

Like the census, therefore, South African museums were as much a visual and surveyable panorama of the inertia of the Other as they were a strategy of the display of the Self. They doubled the distance of observation but, by representing a recognizable Other, in turn initiated an inversion; an artifact of self-reflective identity. Initially, however, the accumulation of Buddhist artifact in South African museums were indicative of a more unselfconscious and bizarre accreditation of the exotic. These places of memory, where collective recollections of a South African past were anchored in the memorial present, were consequently also places that demarked an arena for private and public display.

Individual Cape collections, dating back to the seventeenth century, thus included Buddhist iconography valued for its strangeness and personal appeal, as souvenir, rather than for any ethnological attempt at inquiry. Cape

collections were also governed less by Linnaean principles of classification and the simulation of natural order than they were by aesthetic appeal and the rhetorical conventions of affinity and antipathy. Even after the South African Museum was reconstituted in 1855 under the curatorship of Edgar Layard, a Sinhalese specialist, taxidermist, and brother of the more famous archaeologist A. Henry Layard, to receive "objects illustrative of the Arts, Manufactures, Natural History, and Productions of South Africa," collections of Asian culture were amassed as idiosyncratic examples of colonial curiosity.⁶⁰

The Natural History collection in 1855 included, for example, the skull of an Indian tiger, the jaws of a shark caught in the China sea, and a Chinese fish. From the Rangoon River a year later, a Burmese alligator was added, causing consternation when its tank began to leak. In 1863 Lady Oliphant sent to the museum four cases of Himalayan butterflies. General "objects of the illustration of the arts" similarly included a quite haphazard and deranged *melee* of Oriental chinoiserie and the human mementos of their colonial acquirers. A Chinese compass; playing cards; a razor; a pair of shoes; a mirror; musical instruments; and other assorted Chinese curiosities were reflected in the 1855 survey, as was the "calling card" of a Japanese prince. In 1858 Sir John Bowring's donation of two volumes of Chinese paintings consisting of portraits of religious celebrities, "very ancient and curious," were added. These paintings were so curious that Layard issued an appeal for translators of the Chinese texts that accompanied the cartoons to come forward. But the majority of these exotic artifacts failed to form part of any coherent classificatory taxonomy. Henry Balfour, who visited the collections as keeper of the Pitt-Rivers Museum of Ethnology in the United States in 1899, suggested that most were "obscure" and should be taken elsewhere for identification.⁶¹

By far the most systematic collection of curiosities from an Asian origin in the Museum, however, were those that documented what was also a more accurate narrative of their accumulation. European colonial domination and military expansionism in the Orient meant that only a year after the opening of the South African Museum in Cape Town, Asian weaponry constituted one of the most sophisticated classificatory systems convened. Arms and armory from the "Celestial Empire" in the "highly civilized" and commercially strategic province of China, therefore, were housed in separate cabinets in the South African Museum to those of the arms of India, Malaysia, and even, in 1872, to those of Korea.⁶²

Likewise, a slowly burgeoning compendium of Asian numismatic curiosities helped mediate the transition from the Orient as exotic, dangerous, and aberrant, to one in which, together with specifically Buddhist material artifact and iconography, the Orient might appear in the narrative of a more quotidian South African history. As a ritualized commemoration of the Cape and its peoples, in which Asia and Buddhism were present, the museum displayed the Orient only insofar as it was displaced in terms of military and commercial exploitation and domination. In this ritual, Buddhist sacrality was reduced to a "currency" that consecrated a South African social, economic, and political order, but then desecrated the Asian religious tradition.⁶³

That Buddhism was present in this selective material memorialization, in this mythologizing and profanation, is clear from lists of accessions. Donations to the Museum included, in 1898, two Indian bronze *rupas* and, in 1905, a collection of Tibetan Buddhist "ritual implements," including "charms," "votive tablets," "religious relics," amulets depicting Avalokitesvara and Amida, and a "mani stone," upon which was inscribed the Buddhist Jewel of the Lotus *mantra*.⁶⁴

As a division of Natural and Antiquarian "cultures" was anticipated, consequent on the arrival of Balfour and the emergence of more systematic classificatory and "scientific" devolutionist theories, Buddhist artifacts found themselves no longer confined to the lacuna of the innumerable and "obscure." When the South African Cultural History Museum became independent of the South African Museum, moving into the Old Supreme Court buildings and thus arbitrating a division of the "Historical and Antiquarian" (that it took with it), and the "Ethnographic and Natural" collections (that remained), the artifice of Buddhist religiosity gravitated not to the Khoi displays of the latter (living, albeit uncivilized cultures), but to the inert and, therefore, civilized art of the dead in the former.⁶⁵

Donations of Buddhist "art" to the Cultural History Museum, which included a nineteenth-century *vajra* jewel, an amulet and Tibetan relic "of the holy trinity," *rupas* of Maitreya and Amitayas in the teaching *mudra*, and even a copper reproduction of the Buddha's footprint from Adamsberg in Ceylon, were placed within an evolutionary narrative in the museum. Sacred Buddhist objects, considered as antiquarian art, therefore, became part of a colonial history of diffusion. Moving from the labyrinthal necropolis of canoptic shards in the Egyptian Room, through more utilitarian habits of English and Dutch furniture, and rooms set aside for Asian cultures, the museum implicated Buddhism in a geography of commensurate civility, in a history mediated by warfare and commercial "exchange." As part of either the Japanese, Chinese, or Tibetan rooms, the former which collapsed Buddhist difference by endorsing the generic inclusion of an Avalokitesvara icon above a note on Zen Buddhism, and the latter which included two temple trumpets (*rkang-gling*), a nineteenth-century prayer wheel, and a *thanka* depicting the Avalokitesvara, Sakyamuni, and Vajrapani Buddhas, Buddhism was requisitioned as part of a genealogy, an archaeology of South African history. Only in terms of this ritualized memory, and in terms of this

"sentimental" account of the developing narrative of South African cultural history, was the meaningfulness, the identity of Buddhism contextualized.

Frozen in cabinets of Asian curiosity, displaced from sacrality and ritual activity, fantastic and exotic Buddhist objects became part of a ritual that was animated by a myth of *South African* cultural history. In that history, Buddhism's inertia was loaned mobility only insofar as it contributed to an overall African narrative. Excised from sacral temporality in Asia, Buddhism was entrusted articulation in a spatial ritual that reinforced its identity in terms only of the powerful semiotic of pillage that supported culture in South Africa.

The presence of Buddhism in South African museums in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, therefore, might be accounted for in terms of an ironic complementarity in which the otherness of Buddhism was thought to provide one facet of a history of South African self-identity. Thus, the impetus to redeem and convene Buddhist "art" and to displace Asian artifact - before it was too late for "us" to appropriate "them" - was related as much to a South African concern with its position in the scale of power and progress as it was an interest in Asian religion and culture. The collection of objects was an attempt to give substance to a South African evolutionary history, rather than an effort to recover or restore the meaning of Buddhism. The symbolic impress of the Buddha's footprint on Adamsberg, that was stolen by both the Siamese and Chinese polities in the eighteenth century as a monumental symbol of Asian kingship, was reproduced in the South African museum, therefore, as the endorsement of reciprocal attempts to draw sacrality and power from artifact. As Richard H. Davis pointed out, the appropriation of Buddhist iconography in procedures of political expansionism and power served as a signifier of domination and military victory for some time. Most frequent among the repertoire of

appropriated "loot" in mediaeval India, for example, were the regalia of objects closely associated with royalty and the divinities that endorsed it.⁶⁶

By repositioning symbols of Asian sacrality, that were invested in, among other objects, Buddha *rupas* and a pair of royal Tibetan temple trumpets, the Cape requisitioned Buddhism in a narrative of capital accumulation and the subordination of Asia to colonial incorporation. This narrative reflected events centuries earlier in which Asian kings stole Buddhist relics to secure and legitimate legislative control. The ironic power of this contagion, and the violence that initiated it, however, continued to find expression in justifications for the accumulation of Buddhist objects at the Cape. The Reverend H. A. Harker, for example, donated a Buddha-*rupa* given him by a "frightened Burmese monk" when he "took refuge in an open temple on the Rangoon River." The monk had prostrated himself to the "idol" before giving it to Harker, a chaplain to the marine commandos in Burma during the Second World War, presumably not because of his religious commitment, his "refuge" in the Buddhist's three jewels, but because he "did not bear arms." Gifts of submission or donations of Buddhist "artifact" to the South African Cultural History Museum were also motivated by the fear that they would contaminate habitual, private space. Fearing that the Buddha "idol" that he inherited was "Satanic," and not wishing to own "curious items that could in anyway be associated with demonism," one donor urged the Museum to destroy rather than "to pass on anything that may have an evil influence on you or those in the employ of the museum."⁶⁷

The collection of these Buddhist artifacts, and the ritual performances of their exhibition within a South African narrative of national identity, however, was part of a far wider historical idiom. That idiom was based on the assumption that some places in the world could remain "living museums." This was true particularly of the imagining, mythologizing, and museumification of India and Tibet as sacred places for some South Africans.

That this fascination could transpire should not be viewed as unusual. I suggested that the imagination of Buddhism was continually appropriated by South Africans in the perusal of romantic travel writings, real or imaginary; in the redemptive collections of material culture; and in the arrest, the salvage of Buddhism in textually reified artifacts for almost three centuries.⁶⁸

That these inventions of Buddhism were reviewed in many of the Cape's early journals is also not surprising. That they should culminate in articles, written by South African's, that explained rather than only reviewed Buddhism before the turn of the century, is perhaps more unexpected. Arguably the first such article was a six-page feature on Buddhism, written in 1891, for The Cape Illustrated Magazine. The author was Arnold Hurst Watkins, a district surgeon in Alice, in the Eastern Cape, and member of the House of Assembly, in Cape Town. As one apogee, rather than as the beginning of a sensitivity to Buddhism in South Africa, his work serves as a fitting reminder both of the diversity of religions in southern Africa and the history of a South African association with Buddhism. 11 (110)

The Buddha, whose life was "similar, almost to a detail, to the temptation of the good Saint Anthony," or comparable to "Socrates and Christ," noted Watkins, was the founder of a religion called Buddhism. The law of his doctrine, a "law very like in some points to the ten commandments," "with which we are familiar," Watkins asserted, was the basis of that religion. However, Watkins, like many before him, was unsure whether Buddhism was in fact a religion at all: It might best be described, he wrote, as an "highly developed philosophy." Nevertheless, though Buddhism was constituted of "no Supernatural Being," Watkins found that its foundation in a "law" was sufficient to classify it under the rubric religion. In fact, he proposed, Buddhism was "the first religion which recognized the universal brotherhood of man." 11 cont 72

Framed in the familiar controversy of typology and the morphology of Greek and Christian similarity, Watkins proceeded sympathetically and with remarkable accuracy to outline the central tenets of this religious law: "That all life is suffering, that the absence of desire is cessation of suffering, and that the final goal to be striven after is Nirvana." Like the reviewer in the 1853 edition of the *South African Church Magazine*, however, Watkins confided that it was certainly difficult to know what was implied in this last notion of the law of Buddhism. Nirvana was not, he stressed, countering Monier-Williams and Müller, "annihilation" and "the going out of the flame." Nor was Nirvana, citing Arnold, an "absorption into the Supreme Being of the Brahmins." Rather, Nirvana was the "passive rather than active good" of perpetual "rest." "The fact is," concluded Watkins, "to the weary sufferer in this world it is not happiness but rest that is the chief attraction." It was this notion of rest, originating in an Indian genealogy, that "spread north to Tibet and Mongolia, south to Ceylon, and east to China," where, however, the Buddha's law and his teachings concerning Nirvana were "replaced with a Polytheism of the most extensive kind."⁶⁹

Interpretations of Buddhism in the Cape, following rapidly on the writings of Max Müller and Edwin Arnold, and drawing on the diffusionist and textually inscribed translations of those writers, began to determine a South African imagination of Buddhism. That imagination was reflected in journal literature. By the late nineteenth century, however, that imagination was also reflected in the lives of religious dissenters and immigrants in South Africa. These nonconformists made the apparent disparity of Buddhism more distinctive and common-place. But the appropriation of Buddhism was continually premised, however, on the belief that certain continuities between European intellectual ideas and Buddhist philosophies were present. Indeed, as Andrew P. Tuck shows, the translation of Buddhism into European religious or philosophical debate, a process that was mediated through

nineteenth-century German idealism or transcendentalism, for example, was contingent on the belief that some sense of continuity could be found. Prior to that recognition, however, Buddhism remained in the hands of philological scholars who continued to collect and translate texts from Pali and Sanskrit and to index the meaning or "purity" of Buddhism against these texts.⁷⁰

Chapter Three: Rationalists and Romantics

On August 4, 1867, David Pieter Faure began a series of remarkable lectures at the Mutual Assurance Society Hall, in Cape Town. His respondent, Andrew Murray, who was ensconced in the "market place," recalled Leopold Marquard, retaliated to Faure's assertions from the Commercial Exchange. "It is easy to see," began Faure, "how [people] have been led to deify Jesus. Struck by his greatness, they have been led to think that such a man could not have sprung from a sinful human race. They have adorned him with a crown of supernatural majesty." "Take Buddha as an example of this," Faure proceeded. The Buddha "was the founder of a religion called after him, Buddhism, which is now professed by four hundred-million" people. "In direct opposition to the priests, who insisted upon painful chastisement, whereby to escape hell-fire, Buddha taught that we are saved and become blessed by nothing but philanthropy and repentance." After his death, however, "Buddha was looked upon as a god, and worshipped as the chief among gods." "Is it, then, strange," concluded the Unitarian minister, "that Jesus, who was so infinitely superior to Buddha, was worshipped as such?"¹

Murray contended that Faure's interpretation was erroneous. "Modern theologians," among them Unitarians who were preoccupied with "exploring the mines of ancient religious systems," anthropomorphized Christ and misrepresented the Buddha. Moreover, modern Buddhists, declared Murray, believed that "die Buddhisten gelooven in het geheel niet aan een God: zij zijn Atheïsten. De tegenwoordige Buddha is geen God, en hij heeft beloofd dat enkelen van zijn aanhangers ook eenmaal, als hij, tot den staat van den Buddha - dat is, den bezitter van volmaakte kennis (the Buddhist religion was not dependent on a single God: they are Atheists. The Buddha is no God, and he has promised that every single one of his followers will at one point

become, like him, a Buddha - that is, the possessor of absolute knowledge)."2

Faure disagreed. As a footnote to one of sixteen discourses on *Modern Belief*, in reply to Murray's thirteen articles on *Modern Unbelief*, he contested that the Dutch Reformed Church minister's interpretation of Buddhism was in fact outdated. Citing the authority of *Chamber's* encyclopaedia, Faure reiterated that the "veneration of the memory of Buddha was perhaps hardly distinguishable, among the ignorant, from worship of him as a present god." But while it was "improbable that the original scheme of Buddhism contemplated either the adoration of the statues of Buddha or the offering of prayers," these devotional rituals were "an aftergrowth" consequent on the Buddha's death. "And just in the same way," triumphed Faure, "the worship of Jesus among Christians" developed into a degenerate form of devotionism after his death.

As the *South African Commercial Advertiser* noted, the debate would have been unthinkable four decades earlier. Edward Upman's watershed *History of Buddhism* would not yet have been published. However, the commercial exchange debate was not only remarkable for its original contribution to theological investigation. Nor, indeed, was it notable for its deployment of Buddhism in Cape conversation. Conversation at the Cape, as I suggested, was marked by an interest in Buddhism from at least the 1680s. That debate was distinguished by the fact that the authority of Calvinist Dutch Reformed ideology was contested through the idiom of Buddhist mythology in Cape Town in the 1860s.

That debate was one aspect of a discussion, however, that became increasingly influential throughout the nineteenth and into the first three decades of the twentieth century, after "Protestant dissenters," consisting of more than two thousand adherents in Cape Town; three thousand each in Stellenbosch and Uitenhage, and almost eight thousand in Albany in the

census returns for the Cape Colony in 1842, began to articulate their dissatisfaction with Dutch Reformed or Episcopalian practice.³

② Drawing on impulses consistent with critical biblical scholarship and liberal thought, and confronted with an expanding religious pluralism, these "modern theologians" and Protestant dissenters began to explore the possibility of similarities and perceived continuities between Christianity and, among other religions, Buddhism. Foremost among the spiritually disillusioned and religiously nonconformist at the Cape who were influenced by this debate were the Unitarians. David Pieter Faure, founder of the Free Protestant (Unitarian) Church in Cape Town was, together with George Bernard Shaw's Fabian Society friend, Ramsden Balmforth, perhaps their most articulate spokesperson. It is to the writings of both, often published by their coreligionist B. J. van de Sandt de Villiers, that the first part of this chapter turns.⁴

However, the conversation with Buddhism, following the proliferation of review articles that invented and defined that "nineteenth-century" religion in the Cape, also engaged people like Murray. Instead of entering into a dialogue with Buddhist alterity, Murray and a number of Dutch Reformed Church missionaries attempted to displace the religion of the Buddha. Drawn into this controversy were people like the South African diplomat Lowry Oliphant, who saw in Buddhism a challenge for spiritual renewal. And the conversation with Buddhism also involved Theosophists, who, motivated by an essentially esoteric interest, made the strangeness of Asian religions more familiar.

Rationalists, Spiritualists, and religious nonconformists interested in more esoteric practices, therefore, helped to popularize Buddhism within the religious contours of the Cape. Theirs was an invention, however, that discussed Buddhism in the idiom of religious or social impulses that were consistent with a Cape Victorian ethos. They advanced a discourse,

characterized by scientific inquiry, optimism and, to cite Faure, philanthropy, that defined the meaning of Buddhism in terms of the Victorian outlook in which it was reinscribed. Accordingly, Buddhism was imagined within the circumscription of its perceived continuity with the positive social projects of nineteenth-century South African ethics.

Buddhism became relevant at the Cape, therefore, as a corollary to Cape liberal concerns for a more just social order. Buddhism was considered pertinent insofar as it confirmed the validity of the Voluntary Principle, which demanded both the separation of church and state and the recognition that religion was an individual's private concern. The religion of the Buddha empowered the arguments of protagonists debating the Contagious Diseases Act (which Faure campaigned for vehemently), and it awarded support to those who voiced disquiet over economic and gender inequity. Consequently, Buddhism was articulated at the Cape at the turn of the century in ways that reinvented the meaning of the tradition and erased those facets that appeared incongruous with or unacceptable to the central motifs of Cape Victorian sensibility. For those inquirers who found it impossible to ameliorate Buddhism in terms of this inventory, or in terms of Buddhism's apparent esotericism or romanticism, that religion remained an anomaly, something to be displaced rather than to be discussed.⁵

The persistent reinvention of what it might mean to be Buddhist gained expression not only in theological debate or polemical denial, but also in popular literature. South African fiction contributed to ways in which a presumed Buddhist disparity could appear less obscure or exotic to South African readers. Writers like Olive Schreiner, at one time a member of The Fellowship of the New Life Society, that was founded in 1883, and later a friend of the Unitarian leader Ramsden Balmforth, was one such person for whom this was a concern. So too was the Afrikaans "poet laureate" C. Louis Leipoldt. Together with less well-known narrators, including Arnold

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Watkins, Schreiner and Leipoldt contributed to a history in which the strangeness of Buddhism was made more familiar. These writers also helped to alter the way we now have to reimagine the contours of a South African history of religions.⁶

I. Unitarian Interest

David Pieter Faure was born in Stellenbosch. A year after his ordination as a reformed minister in Leiden in 1867, he founded the South African Free Protestant (Unitarian) Church. It was not until 1878, in Graaff Reniet, however, that state archivist and congregant H. C. V. Leibbrandt drew up the first regulations for South African Unitarians. These rules stated that "all could be admitted who affirmatively answered the question: Do you believe that true *religion* consists in love to God and love to man?"⁷

True religion implied, as Faure's discourse documented, a distaste for "supernaturalism." It endorsed the rejection of belief in mysticism and miracles; and it honored the right to criticize biblical authority and to refuse to accept it as infallible. It required, as James Martineau, perhaps the modern Unitarians' most illustrious spokesperson, suggested, that the seat of authority in religion shift from scripturalism to the human experience of the divine in the conscience and soul of the individual.⁸

Consonant with individual authority in interpretation was a reciprocal regard and tolerance for other religious orientations, a tenet that remained fundamental for Cape Town Unitarianism: "Unitarians support a wider ecumenicalism embracing all faiths," noted a 1992 advertisement, "and strive to forge bonds of friendship with religious liberals within Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Mahayana Buddhism and other religions which practice and uphold freedom and tolerance."⁹

In the 1870s, however, Faure's interest in religious tolerance, and in the prospect that religious traditions other than Christianity might provide alternative paths to religious truth, was forged, not through the writings of Martineau, but in relation to critical biblical scholarship and Transcendentalist sensibility. While in Holland, Faure came under the influence of biblical scholars like G. J. Dozy, who argued in a local Cape newspaper in 1863 that research into the religions of Asia was *necessary* to understand Christianity. Faure also read the American Unitarians and Transcendentalists, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Ellery Channing, and Theodore Parker, whose biography was written, in 1864, by the South African Unitarian and historian B. W. Colenbrander.¹⁰

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Unitarian movement in Cape Town, celebrated at the Railway Institute in 1917, suggested the long-standing influence of these writers. Gladys Lazarus read Emerson's "The Word of the Lord," and the members Price and Dennis described Longfellow's "Excelsior" as equal to the best writings of the "spiritual seers" Channing, Parker, and Hawthorne. In a sermon published in the same year, Ramsden Balmforth praised the "noble band" of new England Unitarians - Channing, "the eloquent and divine," and Emerson, "the spiritual seer and prophet" - for their commitment to explaining the "unity of the spirit." This unity, "the fundamental tenet of Unitarianism," was possible, however, only if one returned, argued Balmforth, to some of the "ancient Hindoo mystics" and if one welcomed "every form of religion, from Hinduism to Roman Catholicism, and from Agnostic Buddhism to Tolstoyism."¹¹

It was not an interest that all Victorian South Africans shared. William Thompson, for example, in an 1866 lecture *To the Christian Young Men of Cape Town*, suggested that Channing's religious opinions were "unhappily so much at variance with evangelical truth" as to warrant "great caution." The ongoing discussion nonetheless generated a great deal of

interest. The debate between "liberal" theologians in the defence of Faure, including Johannes Jacobus Kotze of Darling, and Murray's more orthodox Dutch Reformed compatriots filled newspapers following their public exchange.¹²

During the early years of the Unitarian movement, however, Faure's specific interest in Buddhism, as one of the religious traditions that might point disillusioned Cape Christians to the original "unity of spirit," was manifest most articulately in his popular sermons. Published in (1882) he noted in one sermon, entitled Reasonable Religion, that the Buddha, although "deified as a god by the Indian," was a "remarkable illustration" of social reformism and the practical techniques that Unitarians asserted were necessary to attain salvation. Faure.
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Its founder, seeing the evils and miseries caused by the terrible religious creed by which India was enslaved, preached a crusade against the old gods, and achieved one of the most striking successes ever seen. His creed was practical, if not speculative Atheism, yet his followers, far exceeding the Christians of all lands and all sects, the nearly four hundred-million Buddhists, are no Atheists.¹³

Consistent with a Victorian appeal to practical, social theology, and the quest for the historical rather than the divine Jesus, Buddhism persistently entered the discourse of Cape dissenters searching for a viable option to Christian theism, schism, and intolerance. Hinduism, by contrast was deemed polytheistic and thus intolerably superstitious. In 1893 Faure's Sunday congregation discussed how Christianity, confronted with a post-Enlightenment world of plural religious experience, could no longer claim universal truth. Ever since Buddhists sent out missionaries under Asoka, "we were forced to acknowledge that our ideas were not unique, that they were

universal all over the world, differing only in degree, not in kind. We have learned that our system of truth is only a fragment of the universal truth."¹⁴

Support for Unitarian concerns and, as a corollary to them, an interest in Buddhism as a facet of religious universalism and tolerance, appeared in the press also. The liberal newspaper *De Onderzoeker* (*The Inquirer*) suggested in 1871 that the Old Testament was not worth nearly as much as the Vedas, the Qu'ran, and the "hymns of Orpheus." The religious beliefs of other nations, including the "Persians, Medes, Buddhists, Parsees and Peruvians," were as valid, if not more true than Jewish or Christian credence.¹⁵

In September of the same year a South African Christian monthly, *De Algemeen Christelijk Maandblad* (*The General Christian Monthly*), reviewed and extracted F. Max Müller's *The Buddhist Nirvana*. The proof of Buddhism, the review suggested, lay in the fact that the Buddha's message of salvation was comprehensive: It was not a message of metaphysical or supernatural elitism. Buddhism was a practical path intelligible to any individual. Four years later the same journal extensively extracted in three numbers Max Müller's Hibbert lectures, *The Science of Religion*. In the following months it also related the Josephat and Barlaam legend - the analogized life of the "Buddha of Christendom" - that appeared in Latin translations as early as the eleventh century.¹⁶

Not all interpretations of the historical Buddha were flattering, however. While many Cape Protestant dissenters saw the Buddha as a social reformer, some argued, as a reviewer of Rhys Davids' writings did, that "the Buddhist movement owed its origin to a person who would be more accurately described as an earnest *thinker*." The Buddha was an Agnostic. The Buddhist religion was less superstitious than many religions, although Buddhists avoided questions about the First Cause, questions that, though

they did not tend to edification, were not sufficiently and scientifically dealt with by their founder.¹⁷

As a result of the increasing familiarity with the writings of Max Müller and Rhys Davids, and with access to the journal literature in South Africa that reviewed them, other inquirers insisted that Buddhism was the antithesis of all that was good in Christianity. In a stark comparison between Buddhism and Christianity, a reviewer in an (1876) edition of the South African *Algemeen Christelijk Maandblad* noted that, "het laatste wil den zedelijken mensch levend maken; het eerst wil hem dooden (the latter surely wishes to bring life to people; the former wants to bring them death)."

Het Christendom gaat uit van het recht en de waarde van het individu: het Buddhisme van de onwaarde en het onrecht van het individueel. Jezus zegt, geloof in u zelven, hebt karakter: Cakya-muni zegt, geloof niet in u zelven, weest karakterloos (Christianity goes out of its way to stress the truth and the worth of the individual: Buddhism the worthlessness and untastworthiness of the individual. Jesus says, believe in yourself and be of good character: Sakyamuni says, do not believe in yourself and be characterless).¹⁸

In terms of the reviewer's conclusion, Buddhism remained in appearance pessimistic, self-denying, and unjust. Rather than a practical and comprehensive teacher, the Buddha was considered nihilist. This ambivalent position toward Buddhism and the historical Buddha at the Cape at the close of the nineteenth century was in part predicated upon increased missionary zeal. Whereas Unitarians, for example, were drawn to Buddhism because of its supposed compatibility with a (generally theistic, optimistic, and socially active individualism,) many South African missionaries denied any such compatibility. In contrast to Cape dissenters who endorsed some aspects of

the religion, and encouraged conversation, missionaries considered Buddhism an opposition to Christianity and Buddhists opponents to be converted.

II. Missionary Dilemmas

The year following Faure's debate with Murray the Zuid-Afrikaansche Bijbelvereeniging (South African Bible Society) celebrated its jubilee. The forty-first report revealed that, of all lands without the Bible, Asia, which consisted of one third of the world's population, was the most depraved. Consequently, while *De Onderzoeker* documented theological heterodoxy and an interest in confronting the challenge of Buddhism theologically in the Cape, its orthodox counterpart, *De Zendingbode* (*Missionary Notes*), stressed the need for converting Buddhists in the Orient.¹⁹

In successive volumes *De Zendingbode* documented Asian depravity and the indefatigable diligence of missionaries attempting to deliver "the heathen" from their plight. For example, Andrew Murray's brother, George, published an account of the life and work of Ann Hasseltine Judson, a missionary in Burma. Written for the Society, George Murray's *Die Heldin van Ava* described for South African readers Judson's arrival in 1815 in Rangoon where, "omtrent twee mijlen van die stad was de grote Rangoon Pagoda of Gouden Temple (about two miles from the town was the large Rangoon Pagoda or Golden Temple)." This was a sacred Buddhist place, noted the biographer, where "die machteloosheid van Buddha of Gotama (the power of Buddha or Gautama)" was omnipresent. Similarly, in 1895, *De Zendingbode* published an account of Miss Annie Taylor, "zendelinge in China en reitziqter in Tibet (missionary in China and traveller in Tibet)," that narrated the experiences of the first English-speaking woman missionary to visit that sacred Buddhist space.²⁰

These popular accounts prompted adventurous South African missionaries to enter Asia as well. Reverend Daintree, from Mowbray, in Cape Town, was led by the Holy Spirit in 1898 to pray for "Kuenton Kwam" province in China. In the same year, however, Annie Earp, one of the first women missionaries to graduate from the Huguenot Missionary Seminary in Paarl, wrote from Kandy in Ceylon, almost a decade prior to the first male missionary counterparts from South Africa entered Asia, that she was frustrated with missionary work because "de Boedisten hier werken sterk opdat hun godstienst niet moge uitsterven (the Buddhists work diligently to keep alive their religion)."²¹

Contrary to a Unitarian *appeal* to Buddhism because of its global numerical strength, therefore, South African missionaries, like the Orientalists who documented the degeneracy of Buddhism half a century earlier, were drawn to Buddhism through an *apprehension* of Buddhist popularity. *De Koningsbode* of 1906 noted with trepidation that there were some seventy thousand "afgodentempels (heathen temples)," and at least a thousand gods in Japan. The large Daibutz *rupa*, commented upon by Holman, was architecturally unsightly and incredibly large (as an imposing illustration endorsed).²²

J. Addey Malherbe's notice in an earlier pamphlet in 1902, entitled *De Zending: Het Gewichtvolste en Meest Praktische Vraagstuk van den Huideegen Dag (Missions: Their Practical Significance for Contemporary Problems)*, similarly stressed the need for missionaries to Asia. For every person in the Cape Colony, reported Malherbe, there were four hundred Buddhists in China alone and less than one missionary for four million souls. This was a reason to pray for South African missionaries to convert Buddhists, but not to despair (or to convert to Buddhism). As Robert Moffat had converted an evil Griqua heathen called Afrikaner in South Africa, Malherbe recalled, missionaries in Asia had converted a "Buddhistische

priester (Buddhist *bhikkhu*)" called Yaug, who was, the writer declared, one of Satans' heroes in China.²³

The Buddhism illustrated and imagined in these accounts employed many of the comparative reflexes that travellers mobilized a century before. Most consistently, the Buddhist attempt to attain salvation was considered absurd or inhuman. Misreading Chinese rituals, a reviewer for the *Koningsbode* in 1909 suggested, for example, that monks attempted to obtain salvation by continuously ringing a bell. And they were "branded" with incense as a "tekenen van hunne afzondering van die wereld en toewijding aan Buddha (sign of their denial of the world and their allegiance to Buddha)." If not ridiculous, as these illustrations aimed to suggest, Buddhism was also analogous to a persistent Roman Catholic irreverence. Buddhist monks were "tonsured" and lived in "cloisters," noted one writer.²⁴

Missionary document, like Unitarian debate, however, succeeded in increasing an awareness of Buddhism in South Africa. Neither were all depictions devoid of accuracy, as the above descriptions of Chan or Pure Land chanting and the rituals of refuge illustrate, albeit in an idiom of absurd disbelief premised on internal theological resistance. Thus by 1910 writers in South African journals that documented the presence of Buddhism in China and Tibet started to question both ritual and doctrine in some detail. Why, asked one writer, did Chinese monks chant the "Sanskriet" name of Amida, repeating "O mi to Fu! O mi to Fo!" and not, instead, the name of Buddha? Why was Buddhism so successful when the birth narratives of the Buddha were clearly "kinderachtige legenden (childish legends)?" Was the Tibetan Dalai Lama an incarnation of the Buddha? Was Karma comparable with the Christian doctrine of original sin? Was Nirvana the Buddhist heaven? And, asked the inquirer of an article on the "Godsdienst van Tibet" in the *Koningsbode*, were the "vier waarheden, de tien boeien, en den achtvoudige

weg (the four truths, the ten fetters, and the eightfold path)" an adequate account of the procedures and techniques required to attain this heaven?²⁵

At the same time, however, a new age of teachers attempted to answer these dilemmas more adequately. In this regard, missionaries not only went to Asia to teach Oriental Buddhists about Christianity. They came to Africa to teach Black Christians about Buddhism. At Tiger Kloof, a mission school near present-day Vryburg, in what was then the Bechuanaland Protectorate, William Charles Willoughby held a class for some fourteen Tswana-speaking Christians. "We devoted the time to sermons, public reading, and the study of non-Christian religions," he submitted. In fact, he proposed to "confine the work of this class to the study of Buddhism." Buddhism, therefore, was once again indexed, like the census of the following year that tabulated 436 Buddhists (but no Tswana-speaking Buddhists), against a Christian normativity. Students like Maphakela Lekalaka and Roger K. Mokodi, however, convinced the missionary to "treat the old Bantu religion" in a way so that these

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Non-Christian religions [that] were, of course, our main work ... led either to old Bantu religious beliefs and practices or else to Christianity.²⁶

This inquiry into Buddhism was a comparative project, initiated on what might seem like the margin of comparisons and on the edges of a European center, that was a "delightful task," but one that would require "more strength and time" than Willoughby could find. It was a discussion about Buddhism by Black Christians in South Africa that indicated the extent to which Buddhism permeated public discourse and could be employed to review the position of African belief on the scale of religious evolution.²⁷

Buddhism was discussed in South African theological debate, therefore, not only in the context of Christian missiology and the problems

encountered in attempting to convert Buddhists, but in the comparative strategies of African theologians who inquired about the relationship between Buddhist practice and a southern Africa context. Rather than only consider its displacement, such conversations attempted through dialogue to establish the place of Buddhism among the religions of southern Africa. These conversations brought Buddhism into local debate.

The continuing appeal of Buddhism, however, was most consistently expressed in the inquiries of Unitarian thinkers in the Cape. Their interest in Buddhism, nonetheless, was ameliorated in terms of fundamental Victorian values, especially for religious tolerance. Olive Schreiner's friend and David Pieter Faure's successor, in reply to the earlier questions of a reviewer in the *Koningsbode*, for example, argued that the Buddhist Nirvana could *not* be deemed a "Buddhist heaven." The Buddhist Nirvana, which Schreiner referred to in her parable entitled *The Hunter*, was rather "the idea, the thought, though unrealizable completely in a world of finite beings, of an Ultimate Reality."²⁸

The respondent, Ramsden Balmforth, a friend of the Theosophist Annie Besant, whose lectures he attended in London, was appointed minister of the Free Protestant (Unitarian) Church in Cape Town in 1897. He trained at Oxford and, like Faure, was influenced by Channing. Citing the latter in an essay dated 1880 entitled *Liberal Religion and the World Crisis*, Balmforth argued that Christianity needed to be tolerant of other religions. It was acceptable

to keep fast hold of our conception of Divine and Eternal Truth as something precious and sacred to us, *but* [also] to allow others the right to their conception of Divine and Eternal Truth as something sacred and precious to them, and the way of saving grace to them.²⁹

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Divine truth, therefore, was not the domain only of Christianity. "In the oldest faiths and religions as in the newest," Balmforth proposed, "in Confucianism, in Buddhism, in Hinduism, in Parseeism, and in Shintooism," there existed a spark of the Ultimate. All religion was a "striving after something higher" and "in most, if not all of the religions of the world, we find this element in varying degree. In Hinduism, in Buddhism, in Mohammedanism, as well as in Christianity."³⁰

Likewise, wrote Balmforth in *The New Reformation*, in 1893, the six great "Bibles," as he called them, "the Vedas of the Hindoos, the Tipitaka of the Buddhists, the Zend Avesta of the Parsees, the Sacred Books of the Chinese, the Koran of the [Muslims], and the Jewish and Christian Scriptures," all contained precepts that were "not only of a kindred character, but identical in spirit and meaning." The Buddhist injunction in the "Dharmatrata" to avoid wicked actions and practice virtue, promising that "he who has made that his goal will speedily find rest in Nirvana," furthermore, was thus consistent with Christian morality and eschatology. Such characteristic similarities were apparent in the lives of the worlds' religious leaders also, argued Balmforth. "Sakya-Muni, in the purity, devotion, and renunciation of his life," was not unlike Jesus: The Sakyamuni Buddha was "typical of sublime saintliness."³¹

III. Higher Criticism, Higher Buddhism

Interest at the Cape in Asian religions and, by the turn of the century, an inquiry into Buddhism specifically continued to be mediated by an appeal to religious tolerance, and by encounters with the historical Buddha consistent with an internal theological agenda. Interest was also occasioned by a rejection of biblical infallibility. Perhaps the most articulate South African

proponent of this "Higher Criticism" was the Bishop of Natal, John William Colenso. Five years before the Commercial Exchange debate, in 1862, Bishop Colenso concluded the first volume of an exegesis of the Pentateuch, noting that it was no longer necessary to "maintain every part of the Bible as an infallible record." The Bishop even hoped that as ministers of God's message of love, South African Christians would find common ground on which to "meet the Mahomedan, the Brahmin, and the Buddhist, as well as the untutored savage of South Africa."³²

Drawing inspiration from the example of Colenso's informant, a Zulu convert and catechist, William Ngidi, "who had convinced the Bishop of the mythological basis of biblical flood," Balmforth likewise suggested, "*From the Standpoint of Higher Criticism*," published in 1904, that the Bible could not be the final authority in theological and religious matters. Since it was the human spirit that produced all sacred texts, it was the human spirit that alone was infallible. As Balmforth wrote to one inquirer, Caroline Molteno:

With regards to Revelations. I hope you will not be shocked when I say that ... its authorship is doubtful and its spirit wholly opposed to the spirit and school of Jesus and John. It is imperialistic and vengeful in tone.... Without it the New Testament would be an excellent peace manual.³³

Indeed, most faiths were acceptable to Colenso, so long as they avoided war and injustice. In this shape, the discussion of Buddhism continued to mediate Cape theological debate. "What does it matter to me," wrote Balmforth in 1880, "whether my neighbor calls himself Trinitarian or Unitarian, Confucian or Buddhist, so long as he will help us rid the world of War and Slavery and the evils of selfishness and the worship of Mammon."³⁴

Along these lines, Balmforth appealed for a League of Religions that would be animated by a "spirit not limited by geography or race." Before the

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South African Association for the Advancement of Science, he proposed a League of Peace to "encourage the views of the Buddha, Saint Francis, George Fox and Tolstoy." In education, he fought against the "Conscience Clause" that required academics to undertake a religious-commitment evaluation. Balmforth held strong anti-racist and anti-sexist convictions. He was attracted to the non-racial Buddhist society in Ceylon, that he eventually visited. He considered Buddhism superior to Christianity because the Christianity of the Apostle Paul maligned women, while Buddhism was a religion of sexual equality.³⁵

Only insofar as Buddhism espoused a social gospel was it acceptable and appealing to Balmforth's Cape Unitarian congregation. That Buddhism was appealing was reflected in the number of people who attended his lectures on Buddhism. The appeal of that religion was also suggested by the support Balmforth gained from people who concurred with his perception that while Christianity was "vindictive and avenging," Buddhism was a religion of humility. In 1893 he wrote that, of all religious founders, the Buddha was pre-eminent. Like Jesus, the Buddha was self-renouncing; the Buddha was gentle; had triumphed over temptation; and had purified passion. It was only because "Buddha was, and perhaps always will be ... peculiarly the possession of the Eastern nations," that Christ was regarded as matchless in the West.³⁶

The first of Balmforth's recorded lectures on Buddhism in particular occurred in September of 1921. "To a packed audience," one week after the Unitarian Literary Society and Young Peoples Guild discussed Walt Whitman's interest in Asian religion, and a week before the anthropologist A. R. Radcliffe-Brown discoursed on "Civilization," Balmforth spoke of "Voices from the East and how they influenced Christianity." This lecture was one in a series of seven on the religions of the world, "their relation to Christianity, and what could be learnt from the Science of Comparative

Religion." As his central question, Balmforth asked whether the Buddhist teachings about Karma satisfied the West's sense of justice. Few published records of Balmforth's sermons on Buddhism have survived. *Die Burger* (*The Citizen*), however, noted that at a meeting of the Unitarian Literary Society Balmforth's talk on Buddhism included mention of the fact that Buddha

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het geen god of afgod erken nie en geleer dat die mens vir sy eie dade verantwoordlik is, vry is en geen priesters nodig het nie. En het glo aan die transmigrasie van die siel en in hoer lewe hiernamaals (acknowledges no devils and no gods, and teaches people that they are answerable to their own action, are free, and require no priests. He believes in the transmigration of the soul and in a higher life in the hereafter).³⁷

The appeal of Buddhism for Unitarians, therefore, remained bound to the higher criticism of nineteenth-century theism and individualism, if not to Christian "citizenship" in South Africa. Indeed, Balmforth's interpretation of Buddhism was evasive on the fundamental teachings of *anatta*, an aspect of the Buddhist tradition that appeared to contradict Christian concerns with a lasting essence or soul. The *dharma* of no-self, or no-soul, was consequently ameliorated according to more acceptable patterns of "reincarnation," rather than rebirth. However, the invention of Buddhism by Balmforth, a Buddhism consonant primarily with an essentially rational, Unitarian sensibility, was also etched into a wider South African association with this tradition. 17 b

This wider public interest was evident in 1931 when Balmforth's visit to Ceylon was aired on radio - the first time that a clergyman used the electronic media in Cape Town. In the *Cape Argus* of the same year, Balmforth wrote about the "thing that brought me to Kandy," the event that inspired Valentijn's invective, "the opportunity of witnessing the Perahera,

thieving, and bad behaviour towards elders)" but also to Boers, and especially to Boer prisoners-of-war.³⁹

Sent to British concentration camps on the island after their capture during the Anglo-Boer War, some 4 735 South African men were taken to Ceylon. There they not only established a South African sacred place, dividing their eighty huts into two villages, named Krugersdorp and Steijnsburg; nor only did they initiate an alternate, nationalist sacred time, celebrating Dingaan's Day in the Diyatalawa Camp with ritual boeresport. They also created a place set apart from Buddhist impurity: One hundred and forty-one Boers died and were buried there, noted Balmforth. Their recollections provided another resource for readers inquiring into Buddhism in South Africa. One prisoner, J. N. Brink, for example, devoted six chapters of his 1904 published memoirs to a history of the island and an account of its Buddhist inhabitants. Brink noted that since Buddhism was twenty-four centuries old, "Christianity can only make little headway against it, the less so, because there are many Europeans, who consider the teachings of Buddha superior to those of Christ."⁴⁰

In this observation, Brink expressed his disquiet with both theological liberalism and the Theosophical revival of Buddhism in Ceylon. He also revealed his unease about Buddhist architecture at the "Temple of the Tooth" and the sacred contents of the *stupa*. Mobilizing comparative reflexes that earlier travellers implemented, the South African exile provided an inventory of relics as comprehensive as they appeared absurd. "As regards the so-called Tooth," Brink wrote dismissively, "this much is certain, that it is not the tooth of Buddha at all, but probably that of a crocodile or of a wild boar."⁴¹

Other, earlier Boer writers and travellers, however, felt that Buddhist *stupas* were not so absurd. The consul-general of the Orange Free State, Hendrik Pieter Nicolaas Muller, who published a biography entitled *Oom Paul Kruger* in 1896, and two volumes of Asian travels in 1912 entitled *Azie Bespiegeld*, studied the religions of the Orient. His journeys through Asia between 1907 and 1909 suggested both academic interest and ritual

pilgrimage. Muller traced a line between the sacred sites of Monomotopa in Zimbabwe, through the ruins of Borobudur in Java, to Angkor Thom in what is today Cambodia. On this pilgrimage, therefore, Muller linked sacred sites in Africa with holy Buddhist places in Asia.⁴²

Tiger Kloof in Bechuanaland, wild boar in Sri Lanka, and Boers in Borobudur, Buddhists seemed omnipresent in a South African imagining of Asian religions. Indeed, as Buddhism became more familiar, the ways of imagining that religion through the media of travels, texts, and objects became habitual. As I suggested, however, the extent to which Buddhism was acceptable was documented only insofar as it reinforced Cape Victorian values, or only insofar as Buddhism was seen to be in accord with nineteenth-century Cape liberal concerns, including optimism and social activism, that it was thought to espouse. The writings of Balmforth's successors, S. T. Pagesmith and Magnus Ratter, reflect this underlying logic of appropriation. Preaching on "The Life of the Buddha" in Cape Town in September 1930, for example, and on a lecture tour to Pretoria in the same year, Pagesmith argued that it was improper "to believe that all people needed conversion." Suggesting that the primary advantage of Buddhism was to be found in its tolerance of other faiths, he went on to argue that "finding Christ is not necessarily the way for all." In fact, Pagesmith reported with approval, "some have found the Buddha or Walt Whitman to be the focal point of spiritual loyalty."⁴³

Likewise, Ratter suggested that Buddhism was more acceptable than Christianity or Hinduism, but only insofar as it was "a more practical and therefore more compassionate" path than was the negative, "pessimistic" tradition followed by the ascetics whom the Buddha abandoned. "Gautama seized on the essentials of Brahmanic subtlety," Ratter noted, "announcing four simple truths and an eightfold path." In this regard, Buddhism was appealing because it avoided a prolix spiritualism that was inconsistent with

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Victorian positive and rational values. Because it was practical, simple, and rational, Ratter declared, Buddhism "reduced mystery to knowledge."⁴⁴ (186)

These were some of the only facets of Buddhism, however, that were deemed of value to Ratter's Unitarian inquiry. He voiced reservations about other aspects. Buddhism, as "pronounced in the *Dhammapada*, preached a message in which there was no urge to ethical action." As Mackin's *African Bookman* asserted, "in the Buddhist religion a man is taught not to marry, but to sit and think until he is not interested any more in times, places, or in the wants or needs of his body." Buddhism was quietist; Nirvana was pure spirituality; and the Buddhist's life, argued Ratter, drawing on the writings of Edwin Arnold, was a "long drawn agony in which only sadness abides." Not only was Buddhism unacceptable because of its presumed pessimism, a feature incompatible with Victorian optimism, but the Buddhist monastic order was elitist. Diametrically opposed to individualism and equality, Buddhism, suggested Ratter, was "an aim of perfection for the monks, not a way of life for peasants and weavers." In conclusion, however, the writer suggested that to condemn the Buddha for this "failing" was unjust. It was "not to be expected that Gautama could, in this respect, rise above the thought limitations of his age."⁴⁵ (186) fatter (19)

By the end of the 1930s, therefore, public conversation about "Higher" Buddhism in Unitarian thought at the Cape appeared to have given way to its address in alternative expressions. Instead of drawing on the "scientific" and rational facets of Buddhism, these alternate expressions explored instead the more romantic impulses of an alien Asian culture. Rather than erasing mysticism and spiritualism by interpreting Buddhism philosophically, they engaged Buddhism as exotic or esoteric. Foremost among such expressions that were attracted to this particular esoteric locution were the Theosophists. But earlier Spiritualist impulses, that grew exponentially with popular psychological and parapsychological interests in

the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, also helped broaden the discussion of Buddhism in South Africa. However, the extent to which Buddhism was endorsed in spite of a decline in its appeal for rationalists was also suggested in the extent to which that religion was adopted as an idiom in fiction. After the decline of Unitarian appeals to Buddhism, therefore, the tradition was again popularized in Spiritualist groups, in creative fiction, and in the Theosophical movement in South Africa.

IV. Buddhist Spirituality

It was as early as 1874 that the *Rules and Information Specifically Arranged for the Guidance of all Interested in Investigating the Science of Spiritualism at the Cape of Good Hope* were drawn up by the Progressive Library and Spiritual Institution. A decade later in 1884, the Cape Town Psychological Society, whose president was the Spiritualist Berks T. Hutchinson, was also constituted. A "Cape Journalist" for the Society wrote the following year of how its Woodstock members often utilized the resources of "Asian Art Magic," the "mandala," and met with "Malay Hadje's" in order to find out all they could about "Oriental spiritism." Not all Cape journalists were willing to publish such "perfect swindle" and "delusion," however. The *Cape Monthly Magazine* of September 1874, for example, refused the essay of a Cape colonist, "Our Investigator," who attempted to defend the planchette, magnetism, seance and rapping. The writer was forced to seek publication with the liberal press of Saul Solomon.⁴⁶

By at least 1876, however, *De Zuid-Afrikaan* (*The South African*) noted that Spiritualist enclaves existed. In an early essay entitled *Het Spiritisme Wetenschappelijk Verklaard en Blootgelegd* (*The Science of*

Spiritualism Declared) it revealed that in China there were Confucian circles; in Siam Buddhist ones; and in South Africa Catholic, Protestant, Unitarian, Trinitarian, and even Dutch Reformed Church Spiritualist groups. One group was convened by the South African diplomat, Lowry Oliphant. Son of the first Attorney-General of the Cape Colony, and one of the first of three trustees of the South African Library, Oliphant visited China in 1858, we recall, at the beginning of the Taiping rebellion. There he documented how statues in the Buddhist "joss [*deos*] houses" were overturned, and how missionaries, although preaching against covetousness, cut short their sermons to participate in the pillage.⁴⁷

Oliphant's association with Buddhism and with practices indicative of apocalyptic renewal did not, however, terminate in 1858. In 1865 Lowry joined his mother at a "Theosocialist" community-farm called "The Use" in Salem-on-Erie, New York. Founded by Lady Oliphant and Thomas Lake Harris, a Spiritualist, Christian mystic, and variously, Buddhist initiate, "The Use" offered nonconformist nineteenth-century Americans a style of spiritual practice that essentially balanced masculine and feminine principles by promoting a "divine marriage." As Thomas A. Tweed suggests, these utopian nuptial rituals were popular in antebellum America insofar as they offered women, especially, an opportunity to challenge Victorian social mores associated with sexuality, marriage, and the family. Consequently, Lady and Sir Lowry Oliphant were not alone in their search for an alternate sacred or sexual experience in America. Their utilization of "divine breathing" techniques and bodily exercises necessary to attain union with a divinity whom Harris called the "Lily Queen," were also not singular. However, encouraged by his experience of Buddhism in Asia, an experience that confirmed the essentially egalitarian quality of that religion, Lowry instituted, along with the program of respiratory and physical exercises, a series of Buddhist visualization techniques. In these terms, Buddhism was

promoted as the religion that could best restore to Victorian Americans a sense of gender equality in an age of sexual discrimination. But in these terms, Buddhism was also redefined by South Africans in America as one corollary of an alternate and exotic Spiritualist practice.⁴⁸

Graham Moffat, who like Oliphant was another visitor to Japan, was also a South African whose interest in Buddhism was based on the spiritual exoticism of this tradition rather than its rational teachings. In (1916) he saw "the famous 'Buddhist temple,'" "the huge gilded representation of the Buddha;" and Buddhist monks in Kyoto "bowed to the golden god" "repeatedly beating a drum." The presumed absurdity of this ritual, a "monotonous ceremony" that only a Buddha who had attained the "Godhead of Nirvana" could endure, occasioned Moffat's criticism. However, Moffat berated the display to highlight the differences between original, spiritual Buddhist purity and subsequent corrupt rituals of priestcraft. According to Moffat, "Buddhism was originally pure and simple Spiritualism."⁴⁹

Likewise, Edmund Bentley, the South African Spiritualist, lawyer, teacher and, after a trip to India in 1950 with Sir Colin Garbutt, initiate of Bhakti Yoga, noted that the religion of "Gaytama Buddha, the Prince Siddhartha" failed to ensure the purity of its spiritualist originality. In a lecture on "Eastern Monism and Western Duality," delivered at the Durban Theosophical Lodge in (1957), Bentley advised that the Buddha, variously defined as "divine agnostic," as "complete agnostic," and as "sublime agnostic" was unable to deter his followers from pursuing an "agnostic monotheism" that considered the founder a "Messiah." As in Japan, Indian Buddhism degenerated into "image-worship." While Gautama, "the Lord Buddha had laid down a kingdom and embraced poverty," wrote Bentley in an autobiography, his followers resorted to "gross materialism."⁵⁰

Despair at Buddhist "degeneracy" in South African Spiritualist circles was clearly initiated by very different emphases than the concerns raised in

either Unitarian or earlier textually inferred criticisms. Therefore, Japanese Buddhist ritual was not considered heterodox because it was irrational, or because it departed from the authority of the *sutras*. Japanese Buddhist ritual was defiled because it failed to coincide with more essential esoteric facets of Spiritualist thought. Esoteric interest in Buddhism persisted in Spiritualist circles throughout the first half of the twentieth century. These groups succeeded in broadening the discussion of Buddhism among South Africans. Some South African even attempted, as did the pseudonymous "Little Poe," to convert Buddhists to Spiritualism since Buddhists "had lost an original spirituality" and become materialists.⁵¹

For the most part though, Buddhism remained for many South African spiritualists a romantic, exotic religion. Like Native American Indians (Skiwauke the Strong Man), or Egyptian Princesses (Princess Asheyet of Neb-Hept-Re Menhotep), Oriental Buddhists (like Tee Hun of the East; Little Nippon; Su su Ling; Little Japanese Arbri, and Wu Lan) functioned almost solely as spirit mediums or guides to the spiritually disenchanted. Such Buddhist mediums provided "the last link with earth from higher information in Spirit," noted a member of a Transvaal Spiritualist group in 1958.⁵²

However, the conversation between South African nonconformists and Oriental Buddhists was not mediated solely through the presence of spirit mediums. A dialogue between religious dissenters and Asian Buddhists was also established in popular fiction. Olive Schreiner's *Buddhist Priest's Wife*, written in Matjiesfontein in 1899, and considered by Schreiner as the "best of all things I've ever written," is illustrative. The book grew out of Schreiner's broad-ranging dissatisfaction with the established orthodoxy of Christianity. Having become an admirer and confidant of Gandhi, she also wrote Havelock Ellis of her concern to live as "Buddha when he dreamed under his

Bo tree." Schreiner questioned in 1892 how it was possible to

believe in the incarnation of any one man as God? It is unthinkable. About my feeling in regard to Jesus it is not strong in any way.... The only man to whose moral teaching I am conscious of owing a profound and unending debt is John Stuart Mill.... I think among great religious teachers [Jesus] does not quite draw me as Buddha and others.⁵³

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Arnold Watkins, whose article on Buddhism, we recall, appeared in the *Cape Illustrated Magazine* in the same year as Schreiner's *Buddhist Priest's Wife* was written, reflected on similar aspects of a Victorian dissatisfaction with Christian orthodoxy and a circumspect consideration of Buddhism in his first novel, *From Farm to Forum, or Young Africa*. Published in 1906, the novel documented the appeal that Edwin Arnold's writings held for a young man, Frickje Potgieter. Sent to Stellenbosch to study as a Dutch Reformed Church dominee, Potgieter exclaimed to his mentor, Baxter:

I feel so ignorant, and I do so want to know. Why just think, for instance, until I read that poem you sent me about Buddha, I didn't even know there ever was such a man. I thought Buddha was just the name of an Indian idol, and that it was all one and the same thing with Juggernaut's car, and the throwing [sic] the children into the Ganges, and those things the missionary books tell us about.⁵⁴

Denying that missionary reports from Asia contained any truth concerning Buddhism, Baxter informed Potgieter of what by the turn of the century, as I suggested, was fairly common knowledge at the Cape. He noted that the "Buddha's discourses on the errancy" of the Vedas, "a collection of hymns not unlike many of the poems of the Old Testament," was composed "some fifteen hundred or two thousand years before Christ." Citing F. Max Müller

as the authority for this date, Baxter argued that "of course modern Buddhism is very far sundered from the teachings of its founder." He did not know for "how long Buddhism retained its original simplicity" or why "the Buddhist priesthood have exchanged the humble hut for magnificent pagoda; have introduced a most complicated system of ritual; and instead of being the humble recluses of earlier ages ... have grown into the most wealthy and powerful priesthood that perhaps the world has ever seen." But, he informed Potgieter, he knew that Buddhism was neither "idolatry," "as the missionary books" suggested, nor was Buddhism an impure Puri procession in which Hindu avatars were sacrificed. Therefore, Baxter declared, he would advise Potgieter not to pursue his studies as a Dutch Reformed Church minister.⁵⁵

A consideration of the presumed failings of Christianity, and an appeal to more exotic, Asian religious impulses, even if, like Buddhism, they degenerated from a presumed earlier authenticity or purity, was not restricted to the literally fictitious. While for most of the spiritually disenchanted, for Unitarians and Spiritualists, Buddhism was something that could animate conversation in South Africa, that debate did not require conversion. For one literary figure, however, the appeal of the Orient led to a ritualized embrace of Buddhism.

On passing through Suez on his way to Asia, where his father, before coming to Genadendal as a Dutch Reformed dominee, ministered to and learnt about "oosterse godsdienststelsels (eastern religions)," C. Louis Leipoldt wrote that "the mystery that seems to shroud the East" called for "a rearrangement of opinion." Citing Chateaubriand, he argued that the Orient conjured up "*des emotions et des images beaucoup plus que des faits* (emotions and images more than facts)." Recalling earlier rhetorical devices, Leipoldt noted further that Asia echoed with "the introspective creed of the Buddhist, a doctrine too philosophic and too highly esoteric to be highly popular." An indication of his inclination toward this esoteric and

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introspective faith was nonetheless given to a friend and mentor, the botanist, Harry Bolus. "I have read two books which proved very absorbing to me," wrote Leipoldt in 1904. The first of these was Henry Fielding's *The Soul of the People*, a volume

written in a rather ambitious style and dealing with religion, sociology and customs of the tribes of upper Burma. It gives one a far more correct (I think) and certainly more pleasant impression of the teachings of Bhud than the writings of Max-Müller.⁵⁶

But it was even earlier than this that Leipoldt expressed his conviction that Buddhism was not merely a form of Burmese social custom. J. C. Vlok, a colleague of the young doctor, noted how Leipoldt loved before mealtimes to offer a *puja*, a form of "gebed of eerbetoen aan oorstese geeste of godhede (prayer or veneration to eastern spirits or godheads)." This ritual marked an association with Buddhism that would continue throughout Leipoldt's life and writing. A series of articles in the popular Afrikaans-language journal, *Die Volkstem* (*People's Voice*), for example, documented the poet's interest in the Tibetan Bardo or Book of the Dead. Shortly before his own death, Leipoldt discussed his views on Buddhism. "I believe in a Supreme Being," he said,

but I cannot accept Jesus Christ as God, and because man has to adopt some mode of living, I've moulded my life on the teachings of Buddha.⁵⁷

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Leipoldt's conversion to Buddhism in the first decades of the twentieth century should not be unexpected given the long history of a South African association with this tradition. What is perhaps more arresting is the way in which his conversion, and the interest in Buddhism reflected in journal writings and public debate, has failed to reshape a South African

understanding of the contours of religious pluralism in the country. Considered by many students as an influential and representative figure of Afrikaner nationalism, few scholars reflected on Leipoldt's interest in and writings about Buddhist belief and practice. Therefore, Buddhism was not even an acceptable religion in fiction for some South Africans.

It was through Theosophy, rather than in Unitarian congregations, Spiritualist circles, or the submerged life of poets and writers who converted to Buddhism, however, that many South African Christian dissenters at the turn of the century were to discover Buddhism and to engage in discussion about that religion. There were historical precedents for this particular bias. The founders of Theosophy, Colonel Henry Steel Olcott and Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, were both interested in American Spiritualism, but criticized the "materialist" tendencies of the initiates. Consequently, both turned away from Spiritualism toward religions that they considered to be most spiritual in essence. Foremost among those religions was Buddhism. In fact, Olcott and Blavatsky were perhaps the first non-Asians since the Greeks of Gandhara to take *pansil*, or the ritual undertaking by lay Buddhists to abide by the fivefold morality forbidding the taking of life; theft; lying; the use of intoxicants; and sexual misconduct.⁵⁸

Instead of invoking Native American guides or adepts, or "negro sorcerers from Africa," therefore, Blavatsky began in the late 1880s to communicate with spiritual seers, including Sinhalese Buddhist monks. Sumangala, the *adhipati* (chief incumbent *bhikkhu*) of the Adamsberg *vihara* (temple) in Kandy, Ceylon, was one of her confidants. Her formalized, ritual declaration of allegiance to Buddhism, however, took place at the Vijayana Vihara in Galle in 1880 under the direction of Akmemana Dharmaratne. While her conversion was an important symbolic event, it was Olcott's allegiance to Buddhism at the same time that occasioned more far-reaching consequences both for Oriental Buddhists and the conversation about this

tradition in the Occident. Indeed, as L. Ananda Wickremeratne noted, Olcott could even be regarded as a sort of Buddhist Asoka, one who like the *Mauryan* emperor "introduced" Buddhism to Sri Lanka. Wickremeratne commented that Olcott was even thought by some Sinhalese Buddhists to have taken the *Mahayana* Buddhist's *Bodhisattva* vow in an earlier incarnation.⁵⁹

Whatever later mythologizing of Olcott might have occurred, it is undeniable, however, that Theosophy contributed extensively to a Buddhist revival and even to the emergence of Buddhist nationalism in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Olcott, for example, established the Buddhist platform in 1891, a pan-Buddhist, nationalist organization of Asian member states. Three years earlier, together with Sumangala, he designed a Buddhist flag and drew up a Buddhist "catechism" in order that there might be a lasting index of Buddhist authority. At the same time, Olcott and the Theosophists popularized this tradition outside of Asia. The *South African Christian Express* in Lovedale, in 1898, for example, noted that "since interest in the Buddhist religion was revived under Theosophic influence" in India, it appeared to have "taken a strong hold on the minds of people" in South Africa. Listing both the objectives of the Maha-Bodhi Society and a letter advertising it from Olcott's prodigy, Anagarika Dharmapala, the *Express* even documented how the Colonel, "feeling indignant at the neglect and desecration of the sublime precepts of Buddha," was led to compose the "aforementioned catechism."⁶⁰

V. Buddhist Theosophy

The first South African Theosophical Lodge, in Johannesburg, received its charter from Olcott in 1899. Initial sponsors included the Chief Resident

Magistrate of Johannesburg, Louis Playford, and an attorney articulated to Mahatma Gandhi, Lewis W. Ritch. It was Ritch who introduced Judaism, Hinduism, and Comparative Religion to the Peninsula Literary and Debating Society when, after the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War, he moved to Cape Town. Other members of the Johannesburg Lodge included Mrs A. Gowland, who travelled widely in Tibet and who regularly spoke on Buddhism; Miss Bissack, who owned a vegetarian restaurant; and H. Sydney Polak, Assistant Secretary of the Transvaal British Indian Association, who, like Ritch was an associate of Gandhi and, after 1958, a member of the Theosophical delegation to the United Nations Organization in Geneva. Membership of the Lodge expanded rapidly, from sixteen members in 1902 to one hundred and twenty-three by the time the first issue of *The South African Theosophist* was published in 1903, under the editorship of Major Peacocke. When in 1909 a further ten Lodges were established, the South African Theosophical Society was inaugurated.⁶¹

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During the first years of the Society interest in the histories of religion included distinctly South African traditions. Early issues of *The South African Theosophist*, for example, focussed on "witchcraft addiction." Unlike the "various phases of religious thought grouped under the heads of Buddhism, Brahmanism, Zoroastrianism, and even Christianity," however, ancestor veneration was considered essentially "innocent of any possible inner, esoteric or occult coloring." Thus while all religions were accredited with two sides - an exoteric, material, and outer tradition of myth, symbol, and ritual, and an esoteric, spiritual, and inner wisdom - African religions were thought to be less refined than Asian traditions because they lacked secret teachings.

Among the more esoteric religions, however, Buddhism, especially, but ironically, Theravadin Buddhism, was thought by South African Theosophists to hold the highest place. This was due firstly to the

proliferation of Theravadin texts and the relative obscurity of Mahayana Buddhism. But this view was also premised on the historical situation of more familiar associations with Sinhalese teachers. After a visit to Sumangala E. Douglas Fawcett wrote in a 1903 essay for the first volume of *The South African Theosophist*:

Now amongst those types of exoteric creeds which have most closely approximated what some of us hold to be the esoteric doctrine or "Wisdom Religion," Southern [Theravadin] Buddhism occupies a prominent place. Nothing indeed is more impressive than the continual insistence of the *Pitakas* on that basal postulate of the occultists, viz., a Nirvana attainable by the "ego" after innumerable descents into physical birth.⁶² (26)

In this particular respect, the Buddhist claim to consideration immeasurably outweighed those of other Oriental faiths. It certainly held precedence over Occidental religions, "whose *faint* tincture of esoteric law - dimly discovered amid a farrago of biblical trash," argued Fawcett, "scarcely repays research." Thus, interest in Buddhism for South Africans sensitive to Theosophical thinking focussed not on the rational or positive, the scientific or philanthropic, but on what Blavatsky called the *Secret Wisdom*. For Max Müller this was "Buddhism misunderstood, distorted and caricatured." Theosophical Buddhism was an "immense amount of drudgery and misdirected ingenuity;" an invention inaugurated by a "feminine weakness for notoriety." For Frederika MacDonald in the *Fortnightly Review*, Theosophical Buddhism, or "Christian Buddhism," was, however, not a womanly corruption but a "childish disturber." Referring to Madame Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*, she argued that Theosophy, "with its foolish miracles and gospel sent by psychological telegraphy," actually diverted the "attention of open-minded persons from the

true to the false Buddhism." According to Macdonald, "True Buddhism," was neither secret nor miraculous; neither esoteric or selective in its membership. It was rational, exoteric, and democratic. Theosophical Buddhism, "mock Buddhism," or "Christian Buddhism" by contrast, was considered a corruption of the truth of Buddhism, as I suggested, because it was not based on textual authority. There was nothing hidden in the Buddhologist's revelation. There was no mystery. "There was, *ipso facto*," argued Max Müller, "no secret." How could one then trust the wild interpretations of Theosophical writers, like Sinnett, for example, who had no linguistic expertise?⁶³

It was the magical, the secretive, and the esoteric conversation with adepts, however, rather than the restraint of the linguist and the rationalism of the text, that provided South African Theosophists with the interpretive tools with which to engage Buddhism. Without these esoteric tools, Buddhist *dharma* would remain undisclosed. Fawcett, for example, suggested that Max Müller's interpretation of Buddhism as nihilist was occasioned precisely because he did not have this inner, Secret Wisdom. There were many "unbiased freethinkers" in South Africa who laboured under similar delusions, noted Fawcett, "probably owing to their want of ability to penetrate the intricacies and vermiculations of Eastern metaphysics." Therefore, philologists and freethinkers misinterpreted Buddhism because they relied on textual invention instead of inner, secret wisdom.⁶⁴

The South African Theosophist's attack on the inpropriety and inadequacy of a textual analysis of Buddhism was not only directed at linguists and Orientalists, however. Neither did his remarks allude only or even to Unitarian rationalism. In reply to J. C. Harris, a generally sympathetic Catholic Liberal Church minister in Johannesburg, he wrote an article entitled "Buddhism Misrepresented" in the *South African Theosophist* for 1904, under the pseudonym the "Sentry," wherein he suggested that the

reverend's theistic and rationalist interpretations of Buddhism were as absurd as Max Müller's. Harris noted in a Liberal Catholic journal, *The Outlook*, that although there was much that was "noble in the Buddha's Creed, much of high morality, of the glory of self-sacrifice, and of the mastery of Desire," Buddhism failed utterly insofar as it "gives no hope. No hope in God, or in Humanity, or in Destiny." Indeed, the most it offered, as a Buddhist monk put it to Harris in Ceylon, and as Rhys David's writings bore testimony, he suggested, was "the extinction of desire; the negation of existence." In reply to Harris' accusation, Fawcett noted that "True Buddhism" could not be salvaged from the musings of either a Sinhalese monk or the writings of a Rhys Davids. "*Not being in possession of the key*," Harris entirely missed the truth of the Buddha's teachings. "No hope for Humanity!" Fawcett concluded. "Why the loftiest flight of imagination based on modern Christian philosophy is as a pale rush-light compared to the midday sun, when one has grasped the conceptions of the true Buddhist philosophy."⁶⁵

Similarly, the editor of the *South African Theosophist*, Major Peacocke, asserted that by "reading all exoteric philosophies and systems in the light of the Ancient Wisdom" Buddhism seemed incontestably positive. The central teachings of Nirvana and Karma were undeniably optimistic and even practical. In Nirvana, Buddhism could be said to be goal-oriented, urged Peacocke. Only those directed by cognition alone would see Nirvana as a "veritable nothingness." The interpretations of Nirvana by "Professor Max Müller and other learned philologists" appeared "nihilist," Peacocke concluded, only because those scholars had "fallen foul of subtle metaphysical imagery in their passion for strict literal rendering."⁶⁶

Therefore, to comprehend the meaning of Nirvana, the inquirer was compelled to move beyond textual analysis. The truth of Nirvana *required* an undertaking to explore and deconstruct the Buddhist notion of Self. Without doing so, Nirvana would imply nothing but, to the thorough materialist,

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"complete annihilation;" to the Red Indian, he mused, "a passing on to the Happy Hunting Grounds;" or to the average Christian, "a Heaven which each person depicts mentally to fit their aspirations." A Buddhist understanding of the true Self, the "Higher Self," noted Peacocke, was positive and practical. The Buddha prescribed "the most definite methods of training whereby we can pass out of the body in a body formed of mind which is grown out of physical encasement."⁶⁷

Fawcett noted that it was because they failed to detect traces of this Higher, esoteric Self in Buddhism that Orientalists like Max Müller and Rhys Davids interpreted the teachings of Karma as an "airy nothing." Lacking the "true key to interpretation," they failed to detect the concept of a "Permanent Transcendent Self." Appealing to continuities in Buddhist positivism and practicality, and mediated by concerns for esoteric rather than cognitive or rational dialogue, Theosophists succeeded in retaining, therefore, a central Occidental consideration for the lasting, individual soul. The notion of *anatta* was subsequently erased in order to make Buddhism seem reasonable. Unable to accept the Buddhist's scepticism concerning a permanent and abiding self, South Africans consequently interpreted the tradition theosophically. In this imagining the more complex subtleties of the Buddha's teachings were evaded.

Since the tradition seemed to deny individualism, unless it was perceived of theosophically, many South African's focussed instead on continuities between Buddhism and social justice or Western democracy. (28) Noting, ironically, that the "whole philosophy of Buddhism rests on a psychological basis," F. Blanning-Pooley argued, for example, that although "Buddhism aimed at the extinction of individualism" it was "truly socialistic and democratic." In a peculiarly South African idiom, however, one in which an abiding fear of Communism was reiterated, the writer contended that Buddhist socialism was premised "not on the pattern beloved of the" |

Russian Reds and our own advanced socialists, who are really extreme Individualists in disguise," but on the holistic "communalism" of Buddha's charity. This social gospel marked the "middle way" for South African Theosophists who were "concerned with the elimination of disturbances and wars, all of which Buddhism teaches in an eminent degree," suggested Blanning-Pooley in a 1923 essay. As a social program, Buddhism promised to "solve most of our present-day perplexing problems and thus bring to the world that peace it so greatly needs."⁶⁸

By the mid-1920s the number of Theosophists in South Africa was reported to be the highest *per capita* in the world. Many South Africans travelled to the Theosophical headquarters in Adyar, India. Mrs. Stanford lived in Adyar for seven years before returning to her Transvaal farm with a pair of sacred *bodhi* trees. Some, however, left Adyar for South Africa. Clara Codd, who became president of the South African society when she arrived in 1938, met Olcott at Bodh-Gaya. Instead of sacred trees, however, Clara Codd buried diamonds in the Drakensberg to remind Theosophists, Spiritualists, Unitarians, and members of the Catholic Liberal Church who accompanied her of the continuing religious presence of the East in Africa. Carving out a sacred space in South Africa for Buddhism, by planting the trees and jewels of the Buddha, therefore, Theosophists helped to shape discourse about Buddhism in South Africa. Although Buddhism was a "precipitous path," a path of "renunciation," noted Codd, many South Africans were nonetheless strongly attracted to the Buddhist way because it "led through renunciation toward *parinirvanic* bliss."⁶⁹

Interest in Buddhism among South African nonconformists, I suggested, was advanced in Unitarian, Spiritualist, and Theosophical debate. That inquiry was initiated by dissatisfaction with orthodox Christianity and encouraged because of the discovery of different forms of Buddhist belief and practice in Asia. Occuring shortly after canonization in an inventory of

nineteenth-century Orientalist writings a more accurate description of Buddhism was also available so that a more informed discussion was possible. Conversation concerning Buddhism nonetheless perpetuated imaginative appraisals. In continuity with the descriptions of Buddhism in eighteenth-century travelogues, therefore, South African Unitarians, Spiritualists, and Theosophists in the nineteenth century reconstructed Buddhism in conversation by locating it within a European social and religious imagination. Although there were many continuities in these strategies of comparison, innovations conditioned by nineteenth-century concerns were also present. Unitarians, for example, argued that Buddhism was consistent with liberal social and political principles of gender equality and individualism, and the rational ideals of "true" religion. Spiritualists and Theosophists, by contrast, viewed Buddhism as more esoteric. These perceived associations reinscribed Buddhism within the confines of Victorian consent so as to make the tradition more appealing and conventional. The inventions of Buddhism in South African debate, however, rarely translated into practice or went beyond the dilemma initiated by Faure and Murray. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, South Africans clearly integrated ways of imagining Buddhism into religious conversation. Christian missionaries, among them Annie Earp, consequently failed to delimit rationalist and romantic debate concerning Buddhism in Africa or to displace Buddhists in Asia.

By the end of the nineteenth century, however, Asian Buddhists were also resident in Africa. The South African commentator C. F. Andrews, who wrote Gandhi's biography and travelled to Asia with Rabindranath Tagore, noted that in this migration South Africa reclaimed its true place in the world, a point eighteenth-century travellers were familiar with. South Africa was "a half-way house on the map of the globe between East and West." The history of Asian Buddhists in Africa, however, was not so much one that

reflected earlier attempts to initiate dialogue with an external Other, Andrews noted. Asian Buddhists did not require that Buddhism be inscribed either within the consent of Victorian debate, the imagination of the spiritually disenchanted, or the articles of Orientalist orthography. The presence of Asians in Africa, suggested Andrews, implied that Buddhism would be employed to recover a living Asian identity and humanity inside South Africa. The arrival of Indian indentured workers, and soon afterwards, the presence of Chinese migrants, thus initiated the first occasion that any organized attempt was made to practice Buddhism in South Africa. The presence of these Indian and Chinese immigrants, however, also occasioned the first time that Buddhism became less a textual imagining than a contextual innovation in the country. It is to this important transition that I now turn.⁷⁰

Part Two

Contextual Innovation

Travelling with the odd and the *improviste*, with a shipwrecked monk from Siam; with a South African Sanskritist intrigued by the "Black Buddha;" and with a Cape missionary compelled by the Oriental origins of San mythology, I have boarded a *bricolage* of strange and unexpected events. In this surreal collage, traversing continents and centuries, I have also highlighted two recurring themes. First, I suggested that the strange was far more familiar than once we might have thought. Buddhists were neither an absurd anomaly in this religious landscape, nor an outrageous anachronism in the history of South African religions. Indeed, I argued that there was a long history of Buddhism in South Africa.

Second, I suggested how strategies for making sense of Asian Buddhism, including the protocols of invention, exchange, and denial, developed out of seventeenth and eighteenth-century travels and the inscriptions of texts. Buddhism, I pointed out, was continually invented in the archive of literary palimpsest; in the artifice and collections of curious artifacts; and in the conventions, among many other conventions, of Unitarian consent. Buddhism was perpetually inscribed in the idiom of its interpreters. That inscription was apparent in the ways that Romanticists seized on Oriental religions, including Buddhism, as sources for securing liberation from the restrictive atmosphere of rationalism that dominated European thought in the eighteenth

century; in the ways that historians of comparative religion, including Eugene Burnouf and F. Max Müller, rendered second-century Indian Buddhism as an aspect of the truth of nineteenth-century German Idealism; and in the ways that Spiritualists and Theosophists in the first decades of the twentieth century interpreted Buddhism within an esoteric idiom. Textualized interpretations of Buddhism persisted in the history of appropriatory strategies that attempted to make sense of that religion in European, American, and, as I asserted, South African discourse. The deployment of critical issues raised by a number of influential theorists in recent times, among them Claude Levi-Strauss and the French deconstructionist Jacques Derrida, suggest that the work of inscriptional interpretation and appropriation will not terminate. Robert Magliola, to cite only one example, recently cast Buddhist Madhyamaka philosophy within a post-empiricist, Derridian discourse.¹

These inventions of Buddhism were unavoidably produced within a context of mercantile exchange - an exchange that reached apotheosis commensurate with the expansion of the Dutch and British East India Companies in Asia. An important nexus of that transaction, I argued, occurred in South Africa. This was because the Cape of Good Hope originally occupied a central position in transoceanic trade. The travel writings that resulted from commercial exchanges in Asia, in the works of colonial administrators like John Barrow, however, aided a South African conception not only of Asian commerce, but of Asian religions, including Buddhism. The consequences of these colonial caricatures of Buddhism were subsequently reflected in public material collections as well as popular writings. South African museums, for example, collated Asian artifacts, comprising Asian "art" and the "impurity" of Buddhist iconography. The exoticism and outrageous anomaly of these Buddhist icons were displayed alongside other aspects of the colonial conquest in which South Africans participated. Rather than an illustration of one of the religions of Asia, therefore, Buddhism was mobilized in South Africa primarily as a consequence of colonial power. That power was confirmed and reinforced in the seizure of colonial bounty. As I will suggest in Chapter Four, the entire history of Indian and Chinese Buddhism in South Africa was

articulated, as a sort of dissonant *Diamond Sutra*, against the backdrop of colonial exploitation in Asia.

The archeology of this inquiry, however, revealed also a perdurable denial of Buddhism, not only in the selective aphasia of this history in South African scholarship, but in a taxonomy of the tradition from Macartney in China through nineteenth-century accusations of Buddhist nihilism in Europe. Underscoring this denial, however, was a chorus of dissent reverberating with a particular question: Is it Buddhism? That recurring question, at least since the days of the Orientalists, Indologists, and mythographers of the nineteenth century, who followed the earlier agenda set by more ignorant travellers, gave rise to three different responses. As David Gellner suggested, these responses appeared as three paradigmatic approaches in the study of Buddhism in anthropological inquiry.²

First, Gellner noted, a "modernist" approach tried to establish a textually normative "truth" for Buddhism. Inheriting the concerns of William "Oriental" Jones, F. Max Müller, and Buddhologist Eugene Burnouf, among others, anthropologists of Buddhism, including Heinz Bechert and B. J. Terwiel, attempted to argue that the only reasonable response to rampant Buddhist ontology was one that returned to the comfortable confines of ordered texts. The authority for any interpretation of Buddhism, therefore, was to be premised on an "authentic" archive of textual resources rather than on any "syncretic" or unauthentic, contextual practice. As I suggested, that approach is essentially violent, for it violates the possibility of an individual integrity. In a variation of the position, Melford E. Spiro argued, somewhat unintelligently, I suggest, that conformity with *nibbanic* Buddhist belief was to be perceived as canonically correct. Forms of *kammatic* Buddhism and apotropaic ritual, by contrast, were to be viewed as "mixed-up."³

Second, Gellner recalled, an "anthropological" approach attempted to distinguish between precepts and practices. For example, in response to the question "Is it Buddhism?" both Richard Gombrich and Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah asserted that it was necessary to review the meaning of Buddhism in terms of an historical hermeneutic

that distinguished between textually "orthodox" precepts and occasionally "unorthodox" practices. Against the backdrop of an increasingly "domesticated" or "secularized" *sangha* in Sri Lanka, for example, both scholars argued that Buddhologists could delineate between canonically cognitive belief and the inescapably ameliorating demands of affective practice. Consequently, "true" Buddhism could be defined at the complex nexus of "practice" and "textual precept."⁴

Third, and in a approach invested with "gross error and misrepresentation," with "colossal misreading," the proposition rendered an "historical-anthropological" paradigm that David Gellner argued was "absurd," but which I suggest is perhaps most persuasive: Namely, that the distinction between text and context; precept and practice; true and false Buddhism, was empirically untenable. Buddhist precepts (like *nibbana*) were not ameliorated by historical context, therefore, to initiate an "unauthentic" (*kammatic*) soteriology, for example. Buddhism was, in the words of Martin Southwold, inescapably "sapiental." Buddhists judiciously and knowingly altered opinion in the context of what Sherry Ortner called a "cultural scheme," so that "Buddhism," or more correctly "Buddhisms," could be negotiated at the confluence of an historical, cultural, and ethnographic moment. Therefore, the divide between what Gananath Obeyesekere called "great and little tradition," or, to pursue the soteriological illustration, between *nibbanic* and *kammatic* salvation, was to be viewed as essentially fluid and contextual, rather than fixed in the "conventional" contrivances of European texts. Indeed, as Ortner's account of Sherpa Buddhist practice shows, questions of regulation and orthodoxy were often reversed. Consequently, the quest for a soteriology founded on good Karma and better rebirth was frequently viewed as doctrinally correct, while the quest for a salvation that was premised upon enlightenment or Nirvana was often considered delusory.⁵

However, behind this question - Is it Buddhism? - lies a more fundamental inquiry, one that is suspicious of there being a comprehensive Buddhist identity, or indeed, to employ a hermeneutic internal to the critique of non-substantiality, one that is suspect of any lasting, ontological distinctiveness. Indeed, as I suggested, and as

Gustaaf Houtman's incisive article on the genealogy of the word in Burmese documented, the term "Buddhism" was inaugurated primarily by discourse internal to emerging European and North American intellectual disciplines. Therefore, the term "Buddhism" reflected the academic concerns of a Western Other, in Southwold's words, "to muddy the waters." In that sense, a more incisive anthropological question should be one that asks not, "Is it Buddhism?" but reverses inquiry to ask, "What is Buddhism?" In pursuit of that inquiry I explore the discrepancy between "precept" and "practice," or, between textual imagination and contextual innovation in South Africa, beginning, in Chapter Four, with the arrival in the late-nineteenth century of Indian and Chinese indentured immigrants in Natal and the Transvaal.⁶

Focussing on the nexus of divergence, the necessary compromise, I am not interested in locating a continuum of "degeneracy" from any "ideal orthodoxy." Nor, primarily, am I concerned with outlining how these Asian communities in South Africa diverged from a canonical "standard." Commensurate with a hermeneutical suspicion of the European invention of the term, I am intrigued by how the complex dialectic between context and text redefines the meaning of Buddhism in South Africa. I explore, therefore, the theoretical notion of a contradiction that Anthony Giddens called "immanent change." In this regard, I ask how the presence of Buddhists in South Africa can significantly sharpen our understanding of what was an object of European invention and a subject of academic, Orientalist inquiry. But in pursuing a chain of co-dependent origination, or to advance a different metaphor, a textile, I also weave a narrative that, contextualized on the periphery of what is assumed to constitute "Buddhism," asserts that European, Orientalist strategies of textual production merely generated the illusion of a central Buddhist "orthodoxy." In these terms, I point to a conclusion that posits that the entire construct of a canonically coherent Buddhist tradition is itself "a system of mutually dependent elements." Initiated by ignorance, that system is an entity, as C. Ramble following David Snellgrove suggests, that "is hardly alien to Buddhist thought." I pursue, in this sense, a further link in *pratityasamutpada*, another thread in a South Africa Buddhist *sutra*.⁷

Drawing largely on the watershed work of Molly and Louis van Loon in Chapter Four, I begin a recovery of this ancient, recent narrative with the story of indentured Indian laborers in South Africa. Though conversions to Buddhism in this community were relatively few in number, the founding of the Overport Sakya Buddhist Society in 1917 led to a period of sustained practice by a small group of Buddhist converts. Since that group was in turn inspired and sustained by principles initiated by Ambedkarian reforms, and mediated, therefore, not only by an internal political and social agenda, but by external, Asian events, the Society, and Buddhism in the Indian community in Natal in general, was short-lived. More recently, however, the emergence of a large number of Chinese-speaking immigrants in Natal and the Transvaal; the construction of a Chinese Buddhist temple near Pretoria; and the arrival of a number of monks and nuns from Taiwan, suggests that a possible and increased diversity among Asian Buddhists in South Africa can be expected.

In comparison to what one reporter called this "great *Chinese* takeaway," I document in Chapter Five some of the events that, following the pioneering work of the Tibetan Friendship Group, confirmed the emergence of *Tibetan* Buddhist places of practice in South Africa, among them the Tibetan Buddhist retreat center at Nieu Bethesda, in the Karoo. That sacred center was employed by South Africans drawn to Tibetan *Vajrayana* and Tantra, rather than to Indian Theravada or Chinese Mahayana practice. However, I also explore in Chapter Five some of the more recent moments in the diversification of *dharma* in South Africa by examining why different Tibetan Buddhist lineages, among them the Kagyudpa and Gelugpa traditions, spawned alternate and periodic groups. And, additionally, I examine how the "true Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin" and the Fellowship of Western Buddhists further invigorated the history of Buddhism in the region - though I am mindful of the utility of distinguishing between "distinctive" traditions within Buddhism, since, as John Holt pointed out, such traditions are continually assimilated into changing patterns of practice.⁸

Instead of an inventory that simply surveys a topography of religious diversity in this country, therefore, I continue to assert that the history of Buddhism, as one

aspect of religious variety in South Africa, was itself constituted of complex and numerous expressions. In Chapter Six, I argue that among these plural religious expressions was an essentially Theravadin aspect. Although the Chapter focuses on a history of practice at a particular Theravadin retreat center, at Ixopo, in the Natal Drakensberg - called by one visiting *bhikkhu*, the Hilton of retreat centers - that Chapter also documents moments in a peculiarly South African *sutra* by describing the emergence of what Alison Smith called this most Quaker of Buddhist traditions in Pretoria and Cape Town. I suggest, in outlining these Theravadin expressions of the meaning of Buddhism in Africa, therefore, that Buddhism was not always mediated by an appeal to the exoticism of Asian ritual. The minutiae of repeated action that was advanced to collapse the disparity between the spatial or temporal arrangements of Asian practice and localized, African praxis, particularly in Tibetan and Nichiren procedures in the region, was often down-played. I describe, in this regard, how the search for an indigenous expression of what it meant to be Buddhist in South Africa occasioned both a recovery of Asian identity and the abandonment of Asian ritual. Managed by apparent continuities between Buddhism and Western disciplines that, I argue, were present in a rational Unitarian, albeit academic interest in the nineteenth century, Theravadin Buddhists, in particular, asserted an autonomous Buddhist identity in South Africa free from Asian ritual.

Confounding, perhaps, what any textual invention of Buddhism elucidates as orthodox or authentic, I increase the scope of this localized interpretative analysis to include in Chapter Six a description of Zen ritual practice, particularly at Korean Son (Zen) centers in South Africa, noting that, as Luis Gomez argued, the "Buddhist tradition has an ambiguous relationship with Buddhist ritual, practicing it with its institutional right hand, condemning it with its doctrinal left." Consequently, I suggest how ritual, especially the ritualization of life in Soto Zen discipline, though not necessarily an anathema to non-Asian impulses and, as Bernard Faure illustrated, in no way inauthentic, improper or "impure" to the Zen tradition, is open to interpretive inquiry in the same way as any other text. Examining the structure, space, and time of

these Buddhist rituals, I initiate an inquiry that employs a hermeneutic not unlike that invoked in my analysis of early travelogues.

However, I am also aware that the Zen tradition itself provides resources for both a structural and deconstructionist consideration of the meaning of Buddhism in South Africa, a tradition premised on contingent and mutually dependent moments, but essentially empty or free of ontological or epistemological organization. I begin to explore, therefore, the meaning of Buddhism in this context, in these centers of Buddhist sacrality in South Africa - at Nieu Bethesda in the Karoo Sneeuwberg; at Ixopo in the Natal Drakensberg; and at the Somerset West Dharma Center in the Helderberge - inquiring how South Africans could be Buddhist in the absence of any attachment to either ritual or belief.⁹

By situating an analysis of these traditions in three mountain centers, that collectively inspired and influenced the history of Buddhism in South Africa, I explore how practice either conformed to or operated in creative opposition against the Buddhist tradition it was derived from. I attempt to uncover some of the continuities and contradictions that occurred in innovations that, I stress, necessarily arose out of and ameliorated the physical, geographical, temporal, and political phenomena of the South African context - a context that, many practitioners argued, was consonant with persistent suffering and non-satisfactoriness, or *dukkha*.

Focussing on these local conditions I pursue a method consonant with reinscribing theory within a situation of indigenous praxis. No longer concerned primarily with the exoticism of travellers and texts, or with the theoretical Other that preoccupied the tourist and the Orientalist, documented in Part One, I deviate in Part Two to celebrate the complexity of internally emergent practice. Rather than the textual "clarity" of the geographically distant, I explore what Arjun Appadurai asserted is an internal but peripheral "messiness" - an arena, ironically, that once registered as a reason for disqualification, rather than as an excuse for address in analysis.¹⁰

That exploration similarly reflects a wider consideration in the anthropology of Buddhism: It transcends the generalizations of romantic exoticism; it confuses the

undisciplined textual and Orientalist theories implicit to academic disciplines of philology and comparative mythology; and it moves beyond a Malinowskian structural-functionalism residing in the remote or primitive to examine not merely what A. R. Radcliffe-Brown called the "convenient locality of a suitable size," but what, following the work of Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner, is a necessary contextualization confirming that symbol, rather than "system," is the primary metaphor for inquiry. Advancing the analysis of Claude Levi-Strauss, that examination further explores the shifting structures, the "universal grammar," that constitutes the changing shape of Buddhism in South Africa.¹¹

In turn, the binary inversions and sequential oppositions that mediated or reconciled Buddhist identity in that shifting structure of morphology, as reflected in the work of, among others, Edmund Leach and, more recently, Stanley Tambiah, also give way to a more practice-oriented analysis. As Sherry B. Ortner argued, following Bernard S. Cohn, that investigation represents a shift from a "static, synchronic analysis" of texts, to a "diachronic, processional" concern for process, development, transformation, and contradiction in contemporary Buddhist practice in South Africa.¹²

Attentive to these spatial conventions and temporally specific moments I explore, therefore, what Martin Southwold argued is a fundamental omission in the anthropology of Buddhism. I examine a narrative wherein the context of innovative praxis, rather than "canonical" text, becomes the barometer of the "truth" of Buddhism. It is not important, in Martin Southwold's phrase, that that analysis "enables us to score points off one or another definition," however. It is important to pursue that examination insofar as it challenges, disorients, or reformulates a more adequate conception of Buddhism, specifically, and of the meaning religion, in general.¹³

The use of Buddhism as an epigraph, or a compass against which to navigate a definition of religion is of course not new. Emile Durkheim's rebuttal of a minimalist definition consonant with the "supernatural being" accorded by Edward B. Tylor in 1871 - following Herbert Spencer, and followed by, among others, E. E. Evans-Pritchard and Raymond Firth - appeared in *Les formes elementaires de la vie religieuse*

sharp Buddhist philosophical presuppositions premised upon non-substantiality, an appeal to refuge or any other "essence" as the constituted measure of Buddhism can be resisted. Importantly, however, I also note that, by defining Buddhism in this way, the meaning of religion in the region can be challenged. For example, the presence of Buddhism in South Africa can confront the possibility of a substantive ontology of religious truth, or, as Ivan Strenski pointed out, can defy the idea of ultimate meaning, since mental constructs concerned with definition are no more permanent and substantial than any other labored device.¹⁶

I declare, in these terms, that the uncommon can appear everyday and that the persistent, recurring exoticism of Buddhism in South Africa can once again be viewed as misplaced. I affirm that there are moments and threads in a history of Buddhism in South Africa that can still be recovered, from the time that Buddhist texts and ancient *suttas* travelled above the heads of the shipwrecked Siamese, to the more recent, eventual conventions of Buddhism's circumscription in the various strategies of religious consent.

Chapter Four: Indian and Chinese Buddhists

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A little over a year before D. P. Faure and Andrew Murray began to question the deification of the Buddha, through the idiom of a comparable decline and anthropomorphism of Christ at the Cape, the first phase of Indian indenture was concluded in Natal. Among those who arrived in the Colony prior to 1911, when the policy of Indian indenture was arrested, and when the number of Indian immigrants escalated to 15 000, was an occasional actor, Rajaram Dass. The son of a renowned Pali and Sanskrit scholar, Pandit Iyodhi Dass, Rajaram was also a sort of Asoka, for he was a portent of the first Buddhist *sangha* in South Africa. His father, who in 1906 built one of the first modern Buddhist vihara, or monasteries, in Madras, entrusted the young dramatist with the dissemination of *dharma*. This duty led Rajaram Dass to establish in 1917, in Durban, the Overport Buddhist Sakya Society.¹

The Tamil-speaking migrant was, however, only one of many indentured Indians who, although encouraged to return to Asia after an initial period of contract for three years, remained in South Africa as free merchants. With an increasing number of "passenger" Indians, most of whom were Gujarati-speaking Muslim or Hindu traders, called "Arabs" on account of their Oriental dress, as well as numerous Chinese indentured laborers and Japanese immigrants, he was also only one of many Asian South Africans who began to broaden the local debate about Buddhism. Recovering a religious identity in a new world that seemed to deny them humanity, these Asian immigrants, for perhaps the first time in the region, started to practice Buddhism in South Africa. While census figures appear decidedly inaccurate, they do give some indication of this expanding commitment. From 1911, when 394 South Africans of Asian origin signalled a Buddhist presence in the

country, the number of Asian Buddhists in South Africa escalated to 12 487 in 1921.²

The presence of Asian Buddhists in South Africa, contingent primarily on their arrival as indentured laborers, and mediated against the backdrop of legislative control and increasing marginalization was not, as I have suggested, the first time that Oriental Buddhists emigrated to the country. While many arguments for this early contract were more apocryphal than ethnographic, the fact that Indian, Japanese, and Chinese travellers, among other Asian peoples, migrated to the Cape in the first centuries of Dutch colonization is unequivocal. That they influenced Cape Indische (2) (Eurasian) culture in the same way that cultural transfers occurred when *see 15179* Cape colonists travelled to the Orient is also undeniable.³

Most visibly, this influence was reflected when Asian immigrants married colonial administrators. With only fourteen European women at the Cape in 1661, for example, and marriages between slaves and colonists considered irregular, legal alliances concluded with these Asian "free blacks" were frequent. Jan Woutersz of Middelburg, for example, married Catharina Antonia of Bengal in 1666. In 1669 Arnoldus Willemsz van Wesel married a Bengali Indian by the name of Angela. It was not only Indian Asians who made their presence felt in the *affaire de coeur* at the Cape, however. Japanese immigrants were also mentioned in colonial marriage registers. Most converted to Christianity. Anthoni of Japan and his wife Annica were married under Christian rites in 1666, and christened a daughter, Teuntje, more than a decade before the Dutch traveller and priest Phillipus Baldaeus was reprimanded for the baptism of slave children.⁴

Some immigrants continued to practice rituals in an Asian religious idiom. This was suggested not so much in the rites of marital passage, but in rituals of death and burial. The Chinese at the Cape, most of whom were unmarried and lived apart from other free blacks, were reported by Otto

Friedrich Mentzel in 1787 to have their own cemeteries. Distinguished from Muslim and Christian graves, the vaults of the Chinese dead gave one indication of a lively religious difference at the Cape. So too did legislation that pertained to these rituals. *Plakaten* that dealt with Chinese burial and religious practice were distributed at the Cape until 1803, when Governor De Mist finally removed the Colony from Batavian legal jurisdiction. The *plakaten* made what might at first appear as obscure Asian ritual seem less abnormal. The *New Statutes of Batavia*, that crystallized in the Cape in 1776, for example, carried legislation governing the use of land for Chinese and Muslim cemeteries. Public rituals associated with the burial of the dead were also mentioned.⁵

Earlier, in 1752, rules were posted informing Chinese residents at the Cape that marriages between Asian free blacks and Muslims, unless under the provision of Christian rites, were outlawed. The building of Chinese temples within city limits was also prohibited. Although these *plakaten* might have made the Chinese at the Cape feel that they were in Asia, many regulations were also responsible for making Chinese residents in Batavia feel that they might end up at the Cape. Ironically, for example, the day before the renewal of a Cape Christian year in 1714, regulations were issued threatening banishment from Batavia to the *Cabo de Goede Hoop* for those Chinese who bought, sold, or used fireworks to celebrate the Chinese New Year in Asia.⁶

Documentation of any Hindu, Confucian, Taoist, Shinto, or Buddhist impulse among these immigrants at the Cape is difficult to recover. It is evident, however, that the value of Asian immigrants and laborers was considered significant not for any contribution they might have made to colonial cultural diversity or religious pluralism. The value of Indian and Chinese immigrants was indexed against the lexicon of a South African labor commodification. Accordingly, the *Cape Times* of 13 April 1889 noted that

Asian workers were "cultured" people, whose lives reflected the teachings of "the almost divine Buddha, [who] taught and practiced the glorious doctrine of self-sacrifice." But this religious background was only significant because it made Buddhists "peaceable" workers who would never be "troublesome."⁷ (3)

Disquiet over Asian indentured immigrants persisted nonetheless. It was a "significant, although sad and disturbing fact," noted A. L. Geyer at the opening address of the South African Bureau of Race Affairs, for example, that while "all the great religions of the world originated in Asia," the Orient remained dangerous, and its emigrants aberrant, since Christianity "had made little direct impression on the peoples of that continent." In fact, the "failure of Christianity even partially to conquer Asia was distressing from the purely religious point of view." Member of Parliament J. H. O. du Plessis was bound to concede in 1956, therefore, that although "Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism were remarkable cultures and civilizations," their "vast and penetrating influence had borne a tremendous threat to White Civilization and leadership in Africa." Fortuitously, wrote Du Plessis, "Providence has willed the birth of a White nation in Southern Africa as a bearer of the torch of Christianity."⁸ (4)

By 1956, however, the birth of another nation was also being celebrated in South Africa. It was not the rebirth of white nationalism that was being honored, however, but the Buddhist *Jayanti*: the 2500th anniversary of the birth and *parinirvana* of the Buddha, Sidhartha Gautama. In a special edition of the South African journal *The Jyoti (The Light)*, an engineer suggested that the torch of Christianity was not the only way in which providence was at work in South Africa. Michael Dawes argued that "Buddhism has for centuries been regarded as, and accepted as a religion." He conceded that "widely divergent rituals and mythologies have developed to such an extent that the original thread is sometimes almost completely hidden." But the tapestry of Buddhism, "which has been woven for over

2500 years," persisted in South African Buddhist practice. Celebrating this Buddhist presence in South Africa in 1956, for example, was the Cape Town Navajivan Dharmic Samelen. Also, in Durban, more than a thousand people, mostly Indians, gathered under the auspices of the Natal Buddhist Society to celebrate the Buddhist *Jayanti* as living proof of the presence of Buddhists in South Africa.⁹

As part of a growing Asian Buddhist community, Dawes noted, these organizations broadened an interest in Buddhism in the region, an awareness that grew from the time of Rajaram Dass' arrival, if not from the time that Siamese Asians were stranded in South Africa. It is to the role played by these societies in promoting Buddhism in South Africa, drawing particularly on the watershed research of Louis and Molly van Loon among members of the Natal Buddhist Society during the 1970s, that the first part of the chapter turns. Placing that role within the context of expanding Indian immigration in Natal, the increasing debate about Buddhism among Indian peoples in South Africa is also reviewed as part of the renewed growth of this tradition in the Tamil-speaking south Indian subcontinent. Consequent on the revitalization of Indian Buddhism in Asia, therefore, I suggest that the debate about Buddhism in South Africa led to a broader dialogue, a recovery of cultural and religious identity, and, for the first time in South Africa, a significant growth in Buddhist practice.¹⁰

Indian Buddhists in Natal initiated a variety of Buddhist forms of practice that have continued among different Asian Buddhist communities in South Africa. The second part of the chapter documents more recent events in the development of a Chinese Buddhist community in South Africa, including the building of a controversial Buddhist temple complex in Bronkhorstspuit, outside Pretoria. In that part of the chapter I also document the arrival of the first permanent teachers of *dharma* in the country. In both these moments I suggest that the history of attempts made by Indian and

Chinese Buddhists to expand the discourse and to recover the tradition in South Africa was consistently mediated by political and economic marginalization and oppression. In that context, the effort to recreate an Asian Buddhist identity in Africa was met with a denial of their authenticity. Chinese Buddhists, therefore, like southern African Khoi, were "not religious," and the Indian *sangha*, like Callaway's Siamese apostates, was not comprised of "true Buddhists."¹¹

I. Indian Buddhists

The use of Indian indentured workers in Natal, beginning in November of 1860, was initiated because of increasing labor requirements in the colony. This demand for labor was exacerbated by the abolition of slavery and the difficulty of procuring convicts or local workers in South Africa. It was to India particularly that many land-owners turned, however, because of a change in British colonial legislation in 1842 that legalized Indian immigration into the colonies. It was from India, therefore, that by July of 1866, at the termination of the first period of indenture, some 6 445 migrant laborers embarked for South Africa. The majority of these indentured immigrants, about two thirds, were recruited from the Madras Presidency in southeast India. Some came from Calcutta and other towns in the northern state of Bengal. As historians Surendra Bhana and Joy Brain suggested, indentured laborers even came from as far afield as Nepal, Burma, and the borders of Kashmir.¹²

Early Indian emigrants indentured for labor in Natal were not, therefore, an homogeneous group from a single geographical area. They came from a variety of climatic regions and differed also in social, linguistic, and religious orientation. Although Ships Lists and registers of the

Protectorate of Indians are not entirely reliable, they do suggest this diversity. From Madras, for example, indentured laborers appear to have consisted of both Malabars (Tamil-speaking low-caste "Coolies") and Gentoos (Telugu-speaking members of the same caste). But emigrants from this area also included a number of writer-caste Vellalabs and some Rajputs (higher caste military people). From Calcutta the majority of indentured Indians were Hindi-speaking, and generally of a higher caste, including semi-skilled laboring castes, like the Koris (weavers) and Lohars (iron-smiths). About five percent were also Brahmin (the higher, priestly caste).¹³

In general, however, it appears that of the total number of Indian immigrants more than eighty percent were Hindu. There were also about eleven percent Muslim and two percent Christian emigrants. And, as was the case on the subcontinent, as statistics from the General Census of British India taken in 1872 suggest, about three percent of the Indian immigrants were Jain, Parsee, or Buddhist.¹⁴

Much is documented of the relatively secure organizational structure of Hindu religious practice among indentured laborers. Hilda Kuper, for example, wrote of the establishment of domestic and communal Hindu shrines soon after the arrival of Indian migrant workers. More recently, Joy Brain pointed out that although immigrants from the Brahmin caste, who were required for some Hindu ceremonies, were not generally favoured by Natal employers, since they required agricultural laborers, Brahmin *poojaris* or temple priests did manage to sanction the building of Hindu temples from at least 1869. The persistence of Muslim religious practice, in spite of numerical paucity among early indentured Indians in Natal, also received scholarly attention. The first mosque in Natal was erected between the years 1885 and 1890 and, as historian A. F. Vanker suggested, the proselytizing of Islam even ventured into Basutoland and the Cape Colony after the Muslim *swale* (missionary) Soofi Sahib initiated a *madressa* near Umgeni in 1895.¹⁵

That the colonial authorities were aware of this religious diversity was reflected in a number of regulations and reports. Adopted in 1875, for example, the *Laws and Regulations Affecting Indian Immigrants and Employers* noted that "Coolies intending to emigrate to Natal" were to be assured that "religion would not be interfered with, and both Hindu and Mohammedans are alike to be protected." Similarly, the *Report of the Coolie Commission for 1872* noted Hindu and Muslim objections when requests for land required for the building of temples and mosques were raised. Reservations about restrictions on marriage laws were also documented. Hindus, in particular, who invested in the Brahmin the right to conduct marriages, felt that magisterial control in 1884 was defiling. Therefore, attention to Hindu and Muslim religious practice; to research on conversion to Christianity among indentured and passenger Indians; and even to Indian Parsee and Jain communities in South Africa, has been long-lasting. Little work exists, however, to document the practices of some of the minority religious traditions among Indian immigrants. Indeed, by the time the *Indians Relief Act no. 22 of 1914* was passed, permitting Indian priests to legitimate Hindu marriages under South African law, no such provision was made for Indian Buddhists, of whom, as I have suggested, there were now more than four hundred, including the Tamil thespian Rajaram Dass.¹⁶ (6)

Although not as vociferous as his father, who, in concert with a more widespread revitalization of Buddhism in India after its decline on the subcontinent, formed the South India Buddhist Association in Madras, Rajaram Dass managed to distribute his father's popular writings, published in the *Tamilian*, among some South African Indian immigrants. After he returned to India in about 1916, it was one of these immigrants, a Tamil-speaking professional photographer, N. Munisamy, whose sympathetic reading occasioned the recovery of what he perceived to be an original Buddhist identity. In 1917, with twenty-five other families, Munisamy 7 (7)

founded the Overport Sakya Buddhist Society. The following year, with the expansion of membership into Durban, and a split in leadership, the name was changed to the Durban Sakya Buddhist Society. Its first president was A. C. Perriaswamier. By 1920, when it was again renamed as the Natal Buddhist Society, the organization numbered 100 affiliated families in branches from Amatikulu to Pietermaritzburg.¹⁷

Among the members of the Natal Buddhist Society were Vice-President R. S. Vengetaser, a co-partner of the United Press in Durban; committee member and later chairperson, A. Nathamanier, a co-editor of the Indian Buddhist's first journal, the *South African Tamilian*; and A. Suthee, a vocalist and member of the Society's *bhajan* (singing) and drama groups. Like the indentured Indians from whom they were descendant, most were Tamil-speaking and, like founder member and eventually, Society President, L. Nagamuthu, most were drawn to the activities of the Buddhist Society by the conviction "that we originally belonged to the Buddhist faith."¹⁸

Activities of the Society after its formation in 1920 not only included singing and drama, however. Lectures in which the Buddha's teachings on the structure of existence were discussed formed an integral part of its diary. A Buddhist Mother's Union, that worked among the poor, was also formed, recalling in some respect Olcott's earlier "Protestant Buddhist" innovations. Many members of the Society were, like one of the founding secretaries, A. Doraiswamier, influential in continuing the work of the Indian Self Respect Movement. Weekly activities held at the premises of the Hindu Tamil Institute, the Bharat Hall, the Vedic Hall, and later at the Saiva Sihthana Sungum in Durban included public testimonies of conversion to Buddhism. Name-giving ceremonies, house-blessings, Buddhist weddings, and rituals attending death and the burial of the dead also formed part of the practice of the Natal Buddhists. Like public testimony, these rituals helped consolidate a Buddhist identity in a predominantly Hindu society. Many Indian Buddhists

also practiced a daily domestic recitation of the Buddhist refuge in the Three Jewels (Buddha, *dharma*, and *sangha*), and lived a life according to the five precepts, the *pancasila*, or ethical abstentions from the taking of life, theft, sexual misconduct, false speech, and the use of intoxicants. Others practiced *anumodana* (taking delight in other people's meritorious actions), as well as *sutra* chanting and the offering of *puja*. Annually some celebrated *Wesak*, the *parinirvana* of the Buddha. By 1956, as I suggested, more than a thousand people congregated at the Bharat Hall to honor the 2500th anniversary of the event.¹⁹

The *Jayanti* celebrations, however, represented the apogee of the Natal Buddhist Society's activity. By the time the Society celebrated its jubilee year in 1980, for example, membership was almost non-existent. The few remaining members anticipated the arrival of a Sinhalese monk and a renewal of the awakening of *dharma*, but membership continued to decline and the monk did not arrive. Without a permanent teacher it was increasingly difficult to procure lasting commitment. This condition, until recently, characterized all subsequent Buddhist communities in South Africa. As historian of religion, Jacobus Krüger, argued, the absence of established teachers thus contributed to the inability of many Buddhist groups to sustain an interest in either the organized life of a *sangha*, or the teachings of *dharma*.²⁰

The decline of the Natal Buddhist Society was caused, however, not only by frustrated efforts to acquire a permanent *bhikkhu* - frustrated efforts that led to an inadequate sacralizing of ritual events and a necessary reliance on lay leadership. Indian Buddhists experienced a more profound isolation. As internal aliens in South African society, and as peripheral members of a predominantly Hindu community, they were marginalized by their economic, social, and, initially, caste status within South African society. This situation followed from the predicament of earlier indenture. Although most

indentured Asians came from either Calcutta or Madras, providing some sense of communal identity, many Buddhist immigrants were from the economically poorer, Tamil-speaking Sudra caste. Doubly deprived in a South African labor economy and in the Natal Hindu community, therefore, Buddhist members of the Indian community were generally impoverished. Little money was available, consequently, to promote the growth of the Society. In Natal, Land Tenure legislation impeded the possibility of Buddhists permanently gaining access to property. Under apartheid, the Group Areas Act forcefully removed Indian families from any land they managed to secure. These legal constraints further entrenched the context of marginalization. This was the case in both Boer Republics. Under Act No. 3 of 1885, for example, 17 000 Indians living in the former South African Republic of the Transvaal were denied the right to acquire fixed property, while Ordinance No. 29 of 1890 forbade Asian immigrants to settle permanently in the Orange Free State Republic.²¹

Although many built private shrines to the Buddha in the home, domestic rituals sacralizing Buddhist space were largely insufficient to maintain any form of continued Buddhist identity. Moreover, many Indian Buddhists, especially women, were rapidly Hinduized through marriage. Some Buddhists also converted to Christianity as a result of increased Pentecostal penetration. Economic deprivation, social and political marginalization, and Christian missions, therefore, reinforced the sense of societal isolation and displacement experienced by Indian Buddhists in South Africa. Indeed, of the twenty-eight members of the Natal Buddhist Society questioned in the late 1970s, the majority knew of no more than ten other Buddhists in the country.²²

II. Caste and Conversion

In the decade between 1951 and 1961 the Indian census figures for Buddhists in the state of Maharashtra increased exponentially from two and a half thousand to more than three and three-quarter million. The majority of these Buddhists were from the "Untouchable" Harijan castes and converted to Buddhism, primarily, in order to remedy a condition of economic deprivation and social and political marginalization. Their conversion, however, was informed by the example of a charismatic low-caste Mahar Hindu and founder, in 1924, of the *Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha* (Society for the Benefit of the Excluded Classes). As Law Minister, Dr Bhimrao Raji Ambedkar also attempted to pass a Hindu Code Bill that would encourage a more equitable social dispensation, although in January of 1950 India's Constitution caused the caste system to lose its legal basis. Dismayed at the opposition he encountered, Ambedkar publicly converted to Buddhism some six weeks before his death in 1956. Ambedkar's conversion was prompted primarily by his conviction that Buddhism opposed caste inequality. His decision encouraged Scheduled caste Hindus and Harijans to adopt Buddhism in order to escape the oppressive conditions of caste. Although Buddhism had only existed on the subcontinent from the time of the fourteenth century among the Newars in areas of Nepal, as well as in the region of Ladakh and possibly Bengal, Ambedkar believed that it was part of an original identity and a submerged Indian heritage.²³

The resurgence of Buddhism that Ambedkar mobilized was anticipated, however, by earlier Buddhist revivals in India. First, Buddhism in India was affected by the revival of Buddhism in Ceylon. David Hewavitarne, who was introduced to the Buddhist Theosophical Society in Ceylon, as the prodigy of the "White Buddhists," Olcott and Blavatsky, took

the vow of the *anagarika* and the name Dharmapala before founding, in 1891, the Bodh-Gaya Maha Bodhi Society in Colombo. With Sumangala as president and Olcott as director, the Society not only succeeded in rebuilding the sacred site of Bodh-Gaya, the temple that marked the place of the Buddha's enlightenment, but also inaugurated one of the first international Buddhist journals and organized one of the largest international Buddhist conferences to contribute to the rebirth of Buddhism in India.²⁴

Second, the revival of Buddhism in India was stimulated by the work of anti-Brahmanist societies. Jotirao Phule, who founded in 1875 the *Satyashodak Samaj* (Society for the Search of Truth), for example, argued that Brahmanism in India was responsible for the oppression of lower-caste Hindus. That Society informed E. V. Ramaswamy's Self Respect Movement, a powerful social, cultural, and political organization, founded in 1925, that tried to cultivate the Dravidian self-identity of lower caste Tamils in Tamilnadu in order to alleviate the tyranny of classism. Eventually, the Self Respect Movement also became prevalent among Tamil-speakers in Natal. By suggesting that Indians should divest themselves of Hindu practices considered to be undignified or outmoded, however, the Society further offered Indians marginalized by the South Africa political economy the possibility of a more "European" identity.²⁵

Therefore, Ambedkar's decisive conversion to Buddhism, his antipathy to Brahmanism, and the formation of a Society for the Benefit of the Excluded Classes did not mark the earliest reawakening of an interest in Buddhism in India. By the 1930s, many conventionally Hindu Indians abandoned Hinduism in favour of Buddhism in Maharashtra and Tamilnadu. But it was Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism in South India, which coincided with the advent of the Buddhist *Jayanti*, that provided the impetus for more mass-based conversions to Buddhism among the lower caste Hindus and "Untouchable" marginalized within the social structure of Indian society.

Since many Indians indentured to South Africa were Tamil-speaking Sudra-caste Hindus, it was to the Buddhist communities in Natal, including those at Pietermaritzburg, at Amatikulu, and at the Progressive Buddhist Society in Malvern, that many low-caste Hindus in South Africa also turned in order to escape positions of inferiority.

As in India, conversion to Buddhism among some Hindu Indians in Natal was premised on the supposed *European* or "international" intellectualism of that religion. Many higher-caste Hindus in Natal, for example, perceived Buddhism, as Unitarians did earlier, to be a more rational, ethical, and reasonable "philosophy" than Hinduism. By converting to Buddhism, they thought that they could, as the Self Respect Society member and Indian Buddhist Society secretary A. Doraiswamier noted, divest political, religious, and racial "liabilities" and become more acceptable to white South Africans who were opposed to "polytheism" and "superstition." Consequently, Buddhism was seen not so much as a religion, but as a "discipline" demanding "complete self-reliance." Because it did not depend upon "mediation with an all powerful and loving deity," or an association with one of any number of Hindu deities, Buddhism was considered a rational and "European" discipline. Buddhism was calculated to be, in Michael Dawes' phrase, "in its purity too austere for the mass of mankind."²⁶

However, some members of the Indian Buddhist community in South Africa endorsed Buddhism in order to consolidate a fragmented *Indian* heritage. Lower-caste Indians in Natal were attracted to Buddhism because it provided what appeared a more authentic pan-Indian identity and in turn obscured the caste distinctions that rendered them powerless. For example, as L. Nagamuthu, a past-president of the Natal Buddhist Society asserted, the "philosophies of great South Indian [Hindu] saints, such as Valluvar, Ambigay-Ammen, Thayumanuvar, and Kabilar" were entirely "compatible

with Buddhism." However, as anthropologist Hilda Kuper observed, when caste differentiation began to lose credence in South Africa, the initial egalitarianism that Buddhism afforded lower-caste Sudras also lost any meaning, thus contributing to the subsequent decline of Buddhism among Hindus in Natal.²⁷

Although the appeal of Buddhism was contingent primarily on either the perception that Hinduism was superstitious and "unscientific," or that Buddhism was of a more authentic Indian identity that transcended caste divisions, some members of the Natal Buddhist Society interviewed in 1970 also considered the compassion of the Buddha an important reason for converting. Commenting on the remarkable achievement of sixty years of Buddhist practice in Natal in 1980, the Mayor of Durban, Sybil C. Holtz, found that the Buddhist ethics of compassion accounted for South African interest in the tradition. "Over many centuries and in different parts of the globe," she noted, Buddhism

proved that among other things, its ethical principles and religious concepts, are of an extremely universal nature, which enables it to cut across a variety of traditions, cultures and historical periods.²⁸

Appreciation for Buddhism in Natal, which was demonstrated by more than six decades of intermittent practice, was not entirely universal, however. The Van Loons' important survey, while invaluable to research, intimates, for example, that the members of the Natal Buddhist Society, like the "Neo-Buddhist" members of the Ambedkarian revival from whom they originated, were really only "nominal" Buddhists. Though none of the twenty-eight Indian Buddhists in Natal interviewed in the 1970s thought the Buddha a god, their interpretations of the Buddha were not considered entirely "orthodox." Seventy percent of those questioned, for example, thought the Buddha to be a

guru; twenty-five percent a saint; and the same number admitted to know nothing of the historical events of the life and death of Gautama. Their philosophical "ineptitude" was also apparent. Although eighty percent of those questioned believed in Karma and seventy percent in rebirth, "fundamental questions," including how Karma operated; what happened at death; and what it was that was reborn, "had never been reflected on." While Buddhists have conventionally thought Nirvana the primary goal of religious practice, only twenty-five percent of Indian Buddhists in Natal interviewed considered this to be the case. Furthermore, although Buddhist precepts generally did not condone the use of alcohol and the eating of meat, three members of the Society were connected with trades that involved both.²⁹

The demise of Indian Buddhist Societies in Natal did not, however, signal the decline of Asian Buddhist practice altogether. Beginning in 1904, (13) due to the acute labor shortage in the aftermath of the South African War of 1899-1902, Chinese immigrants, like Indian Asians, were contracted to work on the goldfields of the Witwatersrand. They came to work on San Kam Shan (New Gold Mountain). From a Chinese population of only 2 461 in 1904, the number of Chinese immigrants to South Africa increased rapidly to 63 567 by the end of the decade. In fact, the Chinese population declined only after 1913, when immigration regulations prohibited the further recruitment of "Asiatics." Chinese immigrants, however, also initiated forms of Buddhist practice that made the apparent exoticism of Buddhism appear more common in South Africa.³⁰

III. Chinese Buddhists

Indentured Chinese laborers were not the earliest Chinese immigrants in South Africa. As I pointed out in Chapter One, a Chinese Emperor in 1409

sent to the Cape Buddhist missionaries who, on their way, erected a stone pillar or stele in Galle, Ceylon, announcing in Tamil, Persian and Chinese that "His Imperial Majesty, Emperor of the Great Ming, despatched the Grand Eunuchs Cheng Ho, Wang Ching Lien and others" to proclaim to Africa the rule of the "world-honored one."³¹

If the message of the Buddha carried by mandate of a Chinese traveller was not perhaps despatched to foreign nations at the Cape, Buddhist messengers were. Out of a total of 1 417 seamen at the Cape of Good Hope in 1792, for example, there were almost as many Chinese sailors as there were Europeans. That the Chinese contributed substantially to the life of the colony was noted by historian Otto Friedrich Mentzel. In 1740 Mentzel reported that many were excellent cooks keeping "scrupulously clean eating houses where tea and coffee" could always be had. There were also prominent candlemakers, bakers, fishermen, and traders among the Chinese immigrants. Carl Pehr Thunberg, for example, noted in 1772 when he arrived in Table Bay that "we were hardly come to an anchor, before a small crowd of black slaves and Chinese came to our boats to sell and barter, for clothes and other goods." They were even, as historians Richard Elphick and Robert Shell noted, allowed to bear arms and were credited in 1722 with their own militia.³²

In contrast to these earlier immigrants, who came primarily from the southern provinces of Kuangtung, Fuhkien, and Hainan Island, Chinese workers, who were interned at Jacob's Immigrant Labor Camp in Durban, beginning in 1904, after a thirty day sea-journey from either Chinwangtao or Chefoo, were incorporated in a South African labor economy. Like the Chinese free blacks convicted to the Cape before them, many of whom lived on the periphery of a predominantly Muslim, Dutch-controlled, Batavian Republic, the Chinese laborers contracted to work on the Witwatersrand were some of the most marginalized members of their nation of birth.³³

Chronic ecological instability, including alternate years of flooding and drought in the northern provinces of Chihili and Shantung, from where the majority of Chinese immigrants were recruited, as Peter Richardson observed, led to the endemic poverty of the Chinese from these regions who came to work as indentured laborers on the Witwatersrand. Disequilibrium between population and land resources exacerbated their plight. In addition, political turmoil was a factor in the recruitment of Chinese labor. As the Transvaal Emigration Agent at Chefoo, E. D. C. Wolfe, pointed out, the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-1895, the Boxer settlement of 1901, and the vicissitudes of dynastic and social collapse meant that immigration "could hardly have commenced under more favorable auspices." Economic dispossession and political instability, therefore, caused Chinese peasant disempowerment and gave rise to their desire to seek emigration. Indeed, the echoes of this context were seen, for example, in the number of Chinese soldiers recruited from among the disbanded Boxers to police mine-laborers in the Transvaal.³⁴

Chinese indentured immigrants experienced other forms of alienation. Of the thirty-four shipments of Chinese immigrants made to South Africa between 1904 and 1907, nearly all consisted of men, even though, in accord with Ordinance 17 of 1904, women and children under ten could accompany the laborers. Most did not speak English, and although some spoke Mandarin (kwok-yu), many indentured workers found difficulty in understanding the various Chinese dialects used by their compatriots. Socially isolated, Chinese miners also bore the condemnation of the society in which they worked. In a note to the Chinese Association Executive in 1907, Chow Kwai For wrote that he not only held "a very low position, and due to the difficulties of dialect" consequently had "very few social contacts." He was "treated like a slave." At the age of twenty-four, and reminiscent of earlier suicides by

indentured Indian workers, Chow Kwai For had made up his mind "to leave this world."³⁵

Rituals of death represented one way in which Chinese immigrants secured identity in a world that denied them their humanity. These rites of passage also created sacred places around which religious practice could be oriented. Erected at a sacred time, in the "thirtieth year of Emperor Kwong Si," the tombstone of Chow Kwai For, that commemorated one "who committed suicide for conscience sake," became one of many sacred centers that memorialized Chinese struggle and located Chinese practice in South Africa. Arguably the most important of these sites was the grave of the first Chinese person to be entombed in Johannesburg. Buried in 1889, *Taai Paak Kung* (Great Ancestor) was one of more than 3 000 Chinese miners to have died on the goldfields of the Witwatersrand at that time. Like the grave of Chow Kwai For, the tomb of the Great Ancestor became a site for religious pilgrimage.³⁶

During the spring (*ts'ing meng*) and autumn (*shui i*) festivals, that were held in accordance with dates set out in the Chinese calendar, so that, ironically, *ts'ing meng* occurred during the South African autumn and *shui i* in the spring, people would place flowers on the graves of their heroic ancestors. Transcending space through the synchronization of time, these communal ancestral rites marked a recovery of Chinese humanity from a history of South African degradation. Although rites of burial and pilgrimage that have sacralized these places of memory provide little evidence of formalized ritual, this is not unexpected. As was the case with Indian Buddhists indentured earlier, there has until recently been no Taoist or Buddhist clergy to sanctify Chinese burials in South Africa. The correct positioning of the grave in accordance with geomantic principles and the coordinates of cosmological opposition, polarity, and dualism, however, does suggest what anthropologist Victor Turner identified as the basic desire to

secure "sacred intervention in the universe." In these rituals, called by the Chinese *feng shui*, pilgrims remained attentive to historical events and to the symbolisms implicit to topography, in the color of the soil, for example, so as to demarcate an alternate sacred geography.³⁷

The public sacralization of death in rituals that ensured the persistence of a sacred Chinese time and space in South Africa have not been frequent. As an alternative Asian sacred center in South Africa, however, domestic space has conformed to an architecture of ancestral veneration that suggests the prevalence of a Chinese Buddhist practice. As part of the filial duty of the family, a duty that extended into the spiritual world, ancestral altars (*shan chue t'oi*), including those to the Buddhist *Bodhisattva* of mercy, Kuan Yin (called Avalokitesvara in Sanskrit, or, in Tibetan Vajrayana terminology, Chenresig), have been constructed, and rituals of offering, including money, incense, and food have been enacted for the benefit of the dead. Although no communal ancestral temples (*t'sz t'ong*) have been established in South Africa, many Chinese have offered remittances to help finance these halls in Asia. Travels in order to transfer the ancestral tablets of the deceased relative to these temples has for many South African Chinese also functioned as a mechanism of ritual pilgrimage securing a sacred center "out there." As Arthur Song noted, some Chinese immigrants sent money to the nearest of these temples, in Mauritius, in order to enhance the fortunes of the dead and support the Buddhist nuns who service them.³⁸

As in Asia, Buddhist practice within a Chinese religious orientation in South Africa was mediated by appeals to Taoist, Confucian, or Shinto belief. Drawing on these different religious resources, Chinese South Africans were accused of not being "real Buddhists" or not being "deeply religious." South African state sociologist Linda N. Smedley, for example, asserted that "in comparison to other Oriental peoples" the Chinese were "eclectic in as much as the number of *pure* Confucianists, Buddhists, and Taoists have been

comparatively small." Similarly, in a monograph entitled *Freewheeling on the Fringes* (of South African society), Smedley maintained that Chinese Buddhism, with "no sense of this incongruity," was a "syncretic, chaotic, uncritical and inconsistent jumble of beliefs and practices of varying origins." Extending this criticism on the basis of a survey conducted in 1989, P. P. Jacobs alleged that Chinese Buddhists in Port Elizabeth were "animist, pantheist, fetishist, totemic, and polytheist." Concurring with Van Loon's earlier critique of Indian Buddhists, and premised on textual imaginings of the tradition, Jacobs insinuated that Chinese forms of Buddhism in South Africa were not "orthodox."³⁹

If Chinese Buddhists were not real Buddhists, they were not only unauthentic on account of their "syncretic" practices. They were also not "real" Buddhists, as Jacobs intimated, because they became Christians. Although, according to Gloria Luckston King, only one Chinese immigrant arrived in South Africa from China as a Christian convert, the number of Chinese Christians, especially Catholic Christians in the Republic of South Africa, increased exponentially in the latter half of the twentieth century. Consequently, Chinese religious practices became an area of inquiry and interest, not because they reflected one aspect of religious pluralism in South Africa, but because they confirmed a history of religious domination. A 1982 publication written for the Synodical Commission for Missions of the Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerk of the Southern Transvaal, entitled *Die Sjinese in Suid-Afrika en Hul Godsdiens* (*The Chinese in South Africa and their Religion*), for example, was written to record the success of South Africa Christian missionaries among the Chinese in Africa. As the authors of this document suggested, "between fourteen and a half and ninety-eight percent of the Chinese population was Christian." Rather than an examination of religious diversity, various interpretations of the number of

Chinese Christians in South Africa provided an index of Christian hegemony.⁴⁰

Statistics concerning the number of Buddhist adherents among the Chinese in South Africa, as with any other statistical returns for South African Buddhists, have little credibility. However, Asian accounts of religious affiliation are also ambiguous. By 1970 only a few Chinese indicated a distinctively Buddhist presence in South Africa. Among as many as fourteen thousand Chinese South Africans, only one percent indicated adherence to Buddhist practice. Therefore, Buddhist practices among Chinese and Asian South Africans was thought to be relatively insubstantial. These practices, moreover, were correctly thought to be focussed on private domestic rituals and burial rites that, until recently, were oriented toward places outside of South Africa. One of the most profound of these places, as I will later suggest, was Tibet. However, as one Asian center in a South African history of sacred centers, the Republic of China (Taiwan) also operated as a prevalent site for the continued practice of Chinese Buddhism in the region. In the next section, however, I analyse one event that located Taiwanese Buddhism not as an alien, external center, but as a sacred site inside South Africa.⁴¹

There were precedents for this emerging importance of Taiwanese Buddhism in South Africa. To cite one example, a past South African Vice-President, A. L. Schlebusch, rehearsed earlier Chinese religious practices in South Africa when he linked rituals of pilgrimage and rites for the veneration of the dead upon representing the Republic of South Africa at the funeral of Chiang Kai Chek in Taipei, in 1975. Chinese South Africans, noted Schlebusch, "lost contact with Buddhism and in many cases adopted the Christian faith." But they were, like the Formosan leader, ardently capitalist and "strongly anti-communist." For this reason, and perhaps for no other, the idiosyncrasies of "superstitious" Chinese Buddhist practices in South

Africa would be tolerated. But could temples be built within city limits in contradiction to jurisdiction established more than two centuries earlier?⁴²

IV. The Battle of Bronkhorstspuit

To secure divine assistance, reported a midnight caller in May to the *Transvaler*, Christians throughout the world would have to pray. Simultaneously, carrying candles and wooden crosses about one meter high, South Africans in Bronkhorstspuit would have to congregate so as to ensure divine intervention. Opposed to "idol worship" and wanting to "show the world that we believe in a living god, not a dead god made of stone," the residents of that Transvaal town would bear burdens, sing hymns, and travel a distance of over two kilometers so that Asian demons could be exorcised. These demons, Pastor Eddie Claasens recalled, were already resident in the space set aside for a temporary Taiwanese temple, a Chinese Buddhist temple that was to be erected within the city limits of Bronkhorstspuit.⁴³

Four months later, on 23 September 1992, however, pilgrimage of a very different disposition took place. Consecrating space by circumambulation, this pilgrimage registered the recitation of Buddhist *sutras*, rather than Christian hymns. Instead of a wooden cross, a two-tier ceremonial table was erected. Attended by, among others, founding master Hsing Yun, resident teacher Hue Li, Absa bank officials, and the town clerk, Hennie Senekal, these rituals consecrated the land where a permanent Buddhist temple, the Nan Hau (Africa China) temple was to be built. One of five Taiwanese Buddhist centers established by the Fo Kuang Shan (Light of the Buddha Mountain) Buddhist order in South Africa, Nan Hau would become the largest Buddhist temple in the southern hemisphere.⁴⁴

As the "property section" in the South African *Burger (Citizen)* noted on Maundy Thursday, Nan Hau Temple was also a chapter of the largest Buddhist monastery in Taiwan. In fact, the South African Bodhimandala of Bronkhorstspuit was a member of a Buddhist "citizenship" that linked numerous temples from as far afield as Hacienda Heights, California, and Hawaii Kai Drive, Honolulu. Continuing the practice of devotees at the Taiwanese temple, which included morning and evening services of *sutra*-chanting, prostration, and meditation, was the resident teacher of the Bronkhorstspuit Bodhimandala, Venerable Hue Li. Hue Li was one of Master Hsing Yun's early followers, and, in 1992, one of ten Fo Kuang Shan Buddhist *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunis* who emigrated to South Africa. Senior sister, the Venerable I Lai, whose relatives first initiated the request for Buddhist teachers to help with the practice of Chinese contract workers at the Agricultural and Technical Mission of Taiwan, in Swaziland, in 1988, became resident teacher in Pretoria. In Bloemfontein, where chairperson Chih-chao Chen arranged a Lion Dance to celebrate the opening of the meditation center on the first day of the lunar year, 23 January 1993, and where attendance grew from forty to over two hundred devotees after the first two meetings in 1992, the venerable Yung Chia began to teach at weekly *dharma* functions, Buddhist lectures, and *sutra*-chanting classes. In Newcastle, in Natal, where about one hundred members met, mostly women between forty and fifty years of age, Man Mu, like her *dharma* sister Man Ming in Cape Town, gave tuition in *sutra*-chanting, sacred music, and meditation.⁴⁵

The practice of these Chinese Buddhists was, for the most part, like earlier Chinese religious practices in South Africa, of a private rather than public nature. That private character of Chinese Buddhist practice was suggested in the ways in which, for example, the Buddhist *bhikkhu* and *bhikkhuni*, as well as the four celibate *she ku* or disciples who accompanied

the monks and nuns, lived in a non-Buddhist South African state. All but one of the nuns, for example, lived in a temporary temple that converted domestic space to divine use. Devoid of furniture, communal living space was altered to accommodate only the Sakyamuni-*rupa* and altar without any changes to external architecture.⁴⁶

However, with the inauguration of the Nan Hau temple site, and plans to build what would be a replica of the Fo Kuang Shan Temple in Kaosiung, Taiwan - including, at thirty-two meters, the tallest Amitabha Buddha-*rupa* in the world - the private nature of Chinese Buddhist practice in South Africa changed. These changes generated vociferous opposition. Objections focussed not only on the proposed size of the multi-storey, multi-million Rands "*Boeddhistiese tempelkompleks* (Buddhist temple-complex)" that would constitute also a funerary center and school, nor only on the fact that the temple would imply the insertion of Asian ornament in South African space, including, as the color of the soil beneficially influenced burial, the fact that Nan Hau temple was to be painted in a conspicuously colored red hue. The controversy accompanying the building of the temple focussed on the fact that demons were thought to have accompanied an Asian architectural aesthetic. // 15

Confronted by an expanding Buddhist immigrant community in Bronkhorstspuit, therefore, Pastor Eddie Claasens of the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk planned to construct a "reuse Christelike Sentrum (a giant Christian Center)" in a form of ritual warfare where competing claims to architectural magnitude were initiated. Not all objections were aimed at Chinese Buddhist "demons," however. A concerned resident thought that the hundred and fifty people who used "Ku Klux Klan-like tactics to put their point across," when Pastor Claasens led his protesting pilgrims to Nan Hau temple in May, ought to have respected the rights of the Bronkhorstspuit Buddhists to freedom of religious expression. The protesting Christians ought

to have "put aside petty childish behavior and fear and rather concentrated on making Bronkhorstspuit a place where Buddhists, Christians, Islams, Jews, Hindus or Confucians could live in harmony." Likewise, a local correspondent, P. Pilliner, argued that one of the most fundamental of human rights was the freedom of religion. Offering a Buddhist prayer for peace to this end, Pilliner suggested that "dominees and religious leaders in the town should study the tenets of the Buddhist faith in order to enlighten their congregations."⁴⁷

With the support of Charles Kuppelweisser, a Catholic priest in Bronkhorstspuit, and well versed in a citation from the Gospel of John (10:16), that recalled there were "other sheep which belong to me that are not in this sheepfold," Pilliner argued that although Buddhists did not believe in Christ, this doubt did not preclude Buddhists from salvation. Although Buddhist believers "did not worship him as a God," he observed, the founder of Buddhism, "Gautama Buddha," was one of the "greatest Buddhist prophets." Pilliner insisted that "the truth of the Buddha's *dharma*," as well as Buddhist ethics and morality, coincided in many instances with the teachings of Christ. He reached this conclusion not only on the basis of Johannine Christology but in a rereading of Buddhist "theology" in the *Metta Sutra*. Hennie Senekal, for seventeen years a Dutch Reformed Church dominee, and since 1986 the Town Clerk of Bronkhorstspuit, also viewed protests against the Taiwanese as unjustified. The Christians who marched on the temple "completely misunderstood Buddhism." Representing Buddhists, the Christian dominee and Town Clerk suggested that the followers of Buddha were "peaceloving and sinless." Accordingly, Senegal asserted, religious objections to the Buddhist temple in Bronkhorstspuit were groundless.⁴⁸

Justification for the building of a Buddhist temple in Bronkhorstspuit, however, was premised on other grounds as well. First,

there was a presidential precedent: Along with Dominee Senekal, George Bush attended the opening of the Hsi Lai Buddhist temple in Los Angeles. Since the American temple was erected by the same order that was to build the Bronkhorstspuit Chinese Buddhist complex, and since George Bush presided over its inauguration, Senegal argued, there could be no reasonable reason for objections to a similar temple in South Africa. Sensitive to global implications, however, Koos le Grange argued that the presence of Asian Buddhists in a peculiarly peripheral South African town did not necessitate a presidential pilgrimage. Moreover, his dominee had been party to a "satanic festival" in America.⁴⁹

Second, the temple would add to the cultural life of the town and in a "New South Africa" could become an important tourist attraction. Since it would cost the taxpayer nothing, a Buddhist temple in Bronkhorstspuit would generate increased revenue. Bronkhorstspuit businessman, Boet Botes, pointed out these commercial considerations. Marthie van der Lith, however, argued that the building of a Buddhist temple was part of a commercially satanic conspiracy, a satanic "Boedha-plan" that the "spirit of a jealous God" would not tolerate.⁵⁰

Third, however, as even Pastor Claasens admitted, the presence of Asian Buddhists in Bronkhorstspuit would provide Christians with new "mission objects whom we can evangelise," although "having Buddha in our town," he warned, would be like "inviting the anti-Christ." As Pastor Van Lille of the Bronkhorstspuit Christelike Gemeente (Christian Community) wrote, at least the building of a Buddhist temple, "in these last days," would provide a chance to "evangelise the heathens."⁵¹

The people of Bronkhorstspuit were divided on this argument. Some citizens, for example, thought that the Buddhists were doing a better job at converting South Africans to "paganism" than the churches were doing to stop the worship, "in our midst," of "*drekgode* (false gods)." By contrast,

other citizens, among them Pastor Terblanche of the Apostolic Faith Church, did not think the building of a Buddhist temple or the presence of Asian Buddhists in Bronkhorstspuit was anything to fear. "Boeddha is morsdood. Ons aanbied die lewende God, en daarom is ... 'n beeld of tempel van Boeddha geen gevaar van enige aard vir ons mense of vir die Christelike godsdiens nie (Buddha is completely dead. We worship a living God, and therefore ... an image or a temple of Buddha is of no danger to our people or to the Christian religion)." H. J. P. Louw, however, questioned whether the Buddha was indeed deceased. "Millions of people," he observed, "prayed to him as a living god." Perhaps certain Christian groups, therefore, who were to be seen "dancing around the golden calf," were among those who honored living idols.⁵²

If not millions, however, at least some people, as I suggested, made a commitment to this living Buddha in South Africa. Under the direction of Fo Kuang Shan clergy, many Chinese South Africans began to recover, like Indian immigrants before them, an Asian identity that was based on Buddhist practice. But like earlier Chinese emigrants, the Chinese Buddhist community, from Bloemfontein to Bronkhorstspuit, practiced the Buddhist *dharma* predominantly in ways that articulated its private nature rather than its public ceremony. These private religious practices included daily attention to sutra-chanting, study, meditation, and prostration. However, although the primary focus remained located in these personal practices, some public ceremonies were performed. Traditional Chinese celebrations held for the birth of the Buddha (*yu fo jai*), the modern so-called Buddha-day festival, rites of burial, and rituals of allegiance or refuge were prominent among these public ritual celebrations. lb

The Buddha-day festival, for example, was on a number of occasions honored by Fo Kuang Shan Chinese Buddhist communities in South Africa. Transcending physical separation from Buddhist celebrations in Taiwan

Bronkhorstspuit meant that some funerary urns were deposited at Nan Hau. The first urn to be interred was that of a young boy from Pretoria, the son of a practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism, who was cremated using Chinese Buddhist rites at the Nan Hau temple in 1993.⁵⁴

Chinese Buddhists in South Africa have also marked a formal commitment to the precepts of Buddhism and the threefold acceptance of

Buddha, *dharma*, and *sangha* in public rituals of refuge. The first of these refuge ceremonies was held in Cape Town in September 1992. From among more than 150 people who travelled to the Chinese Cultural Center from Chinese Buddhist centres in the Transvaal, Orange Free State, and Natal, twenty took refuge in the Triple Gem and in Venerable Master Hsing Yun as root teacher of the Fo Kuang Shan Buddhist order. The outward sign of this inner commitment was endorsed by receipt of a certificate outlining the basic teachings of Buddhism and containing of translation of a new *dharma* name. This external address, according to Fo Kuang Shan nun Man Ming, was the measure of a new Buddhist identity. Without formal refuge one could not be a "real Buddhist." Praying to the Buddha, or chanting to tapes sent from Taiwan, as some Chinese immigrants did in the absence of Buddhist clergy prior to 1992, therefore, was not considered either an adequate or orthodox substitute. Like the Van Loons' earlier account of Indian Buddhist practice in Natal, therefore, Chinese Buddhist practice was frequently considered spurious, even by its own practioners. Described by a writer for the news-magazine *Africa South and East* as a "Great Chinese Takeaway," the beginnings of Chinese Buddhism in Bronkhorstspuit nonetheless signals that Buddhist practice has started to focus on centers inside South Africa rather than only in places associated with Buddhist sacrality in Asia.⁵⁵

Perhaps the most significant example of this repositioning of Buddhist practice in a central, African space occurred in 1994 when ten French-speaking Congolese Buddhist converts took Chinese monastic precepts in South Africa. Earlier in that year the Venerable Hue Li visited the Congo in order to offer instruction in Buddhist philosophy and practice to a number of recent African Buddhist converts. But in October of 1994 ten of the men travelled to Bronkhorstspuit to take monastic precepts with Founding Master Hsing Yun, who arrived at the center from the Republic of Taiwan in order to perform the ritual prescriptions that were necessary to ordain the first

African members of the Fo Kuang Shan *sangha*. The ordination of the ten Congolese men was also the first time that any such ceremony was performed in Africa for African Buddhists. Therefore, Africa was a geographical center for Chinese Buddhist practice rather than a periphery in the development of Asian Buddhist history.

The Congolese men, all of them from between the ages of twenty and thirty, converted to Buddhism because the teachings of the Buddha concerning the universal nature of suffering and impermanence appeared to be insightful, particularly in "a society governed by inequality and oppression." They therefore adopted the Buddhist robe to illustrate the power of compassion in the process of renunciation. Stressing that "white people have to consider the suffering of blacks in Africa as their own [suffering]," the monks nevertheless argued, as Huey-Ju Tsia pointed out, that Buddhism was in some ways perceived of as a "magical religion" that would provide resources to help overcome the consequences of colonial domination.⁵⁶

The continuing presence of African Buddhist monks in South Africa raises a number of important theoretical considerations. Not least among these concerns are questions relating to the formation of an African Buddhist center in the peripheral histories of Buddhism beyond Asia. Equally interesting, however, is the question of acculturation and the ability of Buddhism to accommodate alternate African traditional religious beliefs and practices. Indeed, the question of how an African Buddhist idiom might develop is most intriguing, if not perhaps premature.

For African Buddhist practitioners, however, questions relating to conversion and Buddhist acculturation in Africa do not primarily have any theoretical importance. Conversion to Buddhism raises a number of practical problems. For example, the Congolese monks suggested that vegetarian dietary considerations inhibiting the consumption of meat conflicted with African religious practices associated with ritual meat sacrifices. In this

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regard, African Buddhists have suggested that conversion to Buddhism results in marginalization from the social and symbolic bonds normally secured in African traditional ritual. Similarly, prescriptions associated with a life of celibacy that are central to the Buddhist monastic life are deemed to have relegated these African Buddhist converts to the status of minors. Insofar as African societies have traditionally perceived the celibate or spouseless person to have abrogated ancestral duties, the Buddhist monks are perceived to be irresponsible and immature. Indeed, as was the case in China in the second century, the monk is considered to have failed in his duty to care for ascendants and, therefore, to have forgone his rights to ancestorship. Therefore, African Buddhists have conceived conversion to Buddhism as constituting a radical break with traditional African religious prescriptions. As the Cape Town Fo Kuang Shan Buddhist nun Man Ming pointed out, therefore, the translation of Buddhism into Africa in an idiom that does not serve to increase perceptions of suffering and alienation is the most pressing challenge facing Buddhist teachers in the region.⁵⁷

For most South African Buddhists, however, it is Asia rather than Africa that remains the utopian residence of sacrality and the abode of Buddhist divinity. Although the Republic of Taiwan is one such sacred nexus, among many other Oriental centers Tibet is considered by many to be most holy. As a living monument, an iconographic representation of Buddhist historiography consuming and replicating in geographical temporality the cosmic transcendence of Buddhist teachings, Tibet has become a significant *axis mundi*, an external sacred center for many Buddhists. As a tourist attraction, historian John F. Sears suggested, Tibet has also been a significant site for contemporary pilgrimage or travel. More than that, however, Tibet has played a fundamental role in the mythic imagination of the West. Inscribed in the mythology of travellers, and created from the artifice of travel writings, Tibet has been recreated as a

universally sacred landscape, a "mythic Shangri-La," that has remained pertinent, particularly since the Chinese invasion of Lhasa in 1956. With the emergence in South Africa of a Tibetan Friendship Group in 1969, however, (2) Tibet became a mythical center inside South Africa that not only promoted Tibetan nationalism but also advanced the influence of Tibetan Buddhist forms of practice in this country.⁵⁸

After celebrating the Tibetan new year, or *Losar*, the past president of the Cape Town Theosophical Society, called by her *dharma* name Dolma Chunzom, departed from Johannesburg for this Shangri-La in 1978. As secretary of the Tibetan Friendship Group, she was invited by the Indian mystic and nationalist Baba Bedi to travel. Her companion, Karma Samten Phuntsok, was the first South African to take the robe of the Kagyudpa Buddhist lineage. Both wanted to visit the monastery where Freda Bedi, founder of the international Tibetan Friendship Group, and wife of Baba Bedi, had died. All this was accomplished before returning to Cape Town to celebrate the life of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky on White Lotus Day.⁵⁹

Ordained a Buddhist nun, or *gelongma*, by the Chinese Chan Abbot, the venerable Ming Chi, in 1966, the first Western woman to receive this ordination in more than a thousand years, Karma Tsultim Khechog Palmo married a man as auspicious as she was industrious. Doctor Baba R. Bedi was a direct descendent of the Sikh founder Guru Nanak. They married while she was a masters student of philosophy at Oxford in 1932. Travelling to Burma twenty years later, she was trained in Vipassana (insight) meditation by the famous Mahasi Sayadaw. Shortly thereafter she took refuge in the three jewels of Buddhism. Imprisoned for her involvement in the struggle for Indian independence, she became a high-ranking official of the Social Welfare Board in Nehru's government. In 1961, when the Young Lama's Home School in New Delhi was inaugurated, she was appointed by the Dalai Lama as principal to the school. Along with the young *tulku* whom she took

into her home in Kalimpong, the eleventh Trungpa, Chogyam Rinpoche, she was placed in charge of teaching Asian Buddhists Western metaphysics. In that year Freda Bedi, known to her South African admirers as Sister Palmo, 1961 formed the Tibetan Friendship Group, establishing a branch in Cape Town with Dolma Chunzom as its secretary in 1969.⁶⁰

The aims of Tibetan Friendship Group, as its inaugural newsletter suggested, consisted first of giving "material assistance to Tibetan refugees in India, particularly the monks, the nuns and those of the younger generation whom they are training." Second, however, the Tibetan Friendship Group aimed to "spread the knowledge and understanding of the eastern teachings, particularly the Buddhist ones, among people in South Africa, so that all who are sincerely seeking for a solution to the problem of suffering, its cause and the way to eliminate it may be satisfied." This fact was not merely situated in Buddhist *dharma*, however, but was thought to reside in the distinctively Tibetan representations of the Buddha's teaching. "The importance of the Tibetan tradition for our time and for the development of humanity," suggested the editor of *Maitri: The South African Buddhist Quarterly*, lay in the fact that Tibet was "the last living link that connects us with the civilizations of a distant past." Citing the renowned Tibetan scholar, E. L. Hoffmann, later Arya Maitreya Mandala Lama Anagarika Govinda, Karma Samten Phuntsok argued that "Tibet, due to its natural isolation and its inaccessibility, had succeeded not only in preserving but in keeping alive the traditions of the most ancient past."⁶¹

The first project of the Group was to send money to support seven nuns participating in a three year, three month, three week meditation retreat in Sikkim. By 1978 financial aid was raised by the selling of Tibetan *thankas*, prayer cards, and prayer flags that, as Karma Dolma Chunzom observed, were "quite incomprehensible to us," but offered "protection from all sorts of dangers, sufferings, and hindrances." The group also sold resin

rupas made at the Tashi Jong Tibetan Craft Center in Dalhousie, Himachal Pradesh, to fund a tuberculosis hospital at the Tibetan Buddhist Sakya Center in Dhera Dun. The work of the South African Tibetan Friendship Group in support of Buddhist refugees was interpreted, however, not only as a form of social activism. Consideration for Tibetan exiles was part of a wider commission that was consonant with the Buddhist, *Bodhisattva* path (as the Group's newsletter was later renamed). The most profound symbol of the *Bodhisattva* vow to work for the enlightenment of all sentient beings until released from the cycle of rebirth was the Dalai Lama. It was his "Ocean of Compassion" that Dolma Chunzom discovered when she met Tenzin Gyatso before travelling to Sikkim in 1978. Without ceremony, without "removing shoes, as we do at Watersedge," the Cape Town meeting place of the Tibetan Friendship Group, Dolma Chunzom wrote, "I presented my *katha* [ceremonial scarf] and explained my origin and work for the Tibetans and for brotherhood among mankind." She continued:

His Holiness ... laughed, sharing a joke with his secretary. I showed him a copy of my pamphlet *Koeksister*, explaining the symbolism of white, black and colored South Africans all intertwined ... and he asked a number of questions, showing that he was well informed about the situation in our country.⁶²

The ritual offering of a scarf and the subsequent discussion about a South African Buddhist journal in Dharmasala was an exchange reminiscent of transactions that engaged South African travellers centuries earlier. It was part of a wider dialogue, however, that was contingent not only on mercantile expansion, but also on a continued representation of Tibet as a sacred site. It was indicative of an exchange conditioned by the mythologizing of Buddhism and the museumification of this part of the world. Tibet appeared for these South Africans as symbolic of a universal

mystery, a global metaphor for Buddhist sacrality. Tibet's past was reminiscent of a sacred history that was pervaded by an aura of Western untouchability. As a sacred, Buddhist center outside of South Africa, however, Tibet also sanctioned the possibility of a reciprocal center inside the country. Indeed, by 1979, with the tenth anniversary of the Tibetan Friendship Group in this country, not only was Tibet the locus for South African Buddhist rituals of pilgrimage or commemoration, but Tibetan Buddhists began to claim South Africa as another center for Buddhist practice.

Chapter Five: Tibetan and Nichiren Buddhists

In January of 1983 Venerable Chuje Akong Rinpoche, specialist in Tibetan medicine, Abbot of the Samye Ling Temple in Scotland, and the first Tibetan *tulku* with full authorization to teach Vajrayana in South Africa met a man of similarly sacred disposition. Credo Mutwa, chair of the Traditional Healers' Council of South Africa, prostrated himself before the Buddhist and proceeded to explain the meaning of his divining objects. The Rinpoche, in return, explained the function of his ritual bell and *vajra*, or *dorje*. Then the incarnate *tulku* inquired of the "sangoma" if he was aware of a place of particular significance to Tibetan Buddhists, the Copper Colored Mountain. As we recall, Simon van der Stel travelled to that mountainous region in 1685 shortly before Siamese monks arrived at the Cape. The Copper Colored Mountain, Chuje Akong Rinpoche noted, was the place to which Padmasambhava, the teacher credited with having transmitted Vajrayana Buddhism to Tibet in the eighth century took flight, in the form of a rainbow, at the end of his life.¹

Known as the Guru Rinpoche, or the Great Lama Jewel, Padmasambhava hid "treasures of scripture" (*gter ma*) under variously colored rocks on this mountain in the West that was thought to be in southern Africa. Akong Rinpoche suggested that a South African sacred specialist, reconciled to the Buddhist *dharma* in ways reminiscent of the times in which Padmasambhava converted local deities to guard Buddhist teachings in Tibet, might be appointed as a *gter ston*, a "discoverer of the gem."²

Although Credo Mutwa assured his Tibetan counterpart that there was indeed a woman rainmaker who knew the whereabouts of this Copper Colored Mountain, the discoverer was never located. Undoubtedly, however, by 1983 the jewel of *dharma* did rest in South Africa. In 1686, we recall, Cape Khoi refused to exchange food for Theravadin *suttas* and Siamese diamonds on the Hottentots

Holland mountains. Two and a half centuries later, in 1938, the Theosophist Clara Codd buried diamonds in the Drakensberg as a reminder of Oriental sacrality. Far from Tibet being considered sacred for South Africans, therefore, the third gem, the triple gem of Padmasambhava, buried in the Copper Colored Mountain, implied that southern Africa now appeared as a center of sacrality for Tibetans.

This was not the first time that Tibetan Buddhists encountered South African traditional sacred specialists. In September of 1978 a lama of the same lineage as Akong Rinpoche, and a teacher empowered by His Holiness Gyalwa Karmapa, the sixteenth incarnation of the leading lama of the school, the Kagyudpa, was approached by a Zulu-speaking diviner in Durban. The diviner, Simon Thembo, recounted Lama Ole Nyadhl, recalled a vision in which a green snake, communicating in the voice of an ancestor, instructed him to learn from the Tibetan teacher whose address he was given. In Johannesburg two women "sangomas" were similarly instructed by the shades, the "living dead." For three weeks they visited Lama Ole Nyadhl to discover the source of the unfamiliar visions and voices of familiar snakes they received. Like Simon Thembo, they too were initiated into the Kagyudpa lineage of Tibetan, "Red Hat" Vajrayana Buddhism. Not only was South Africa a sacred place for Tibetans, therefore, but Tibetan Buddhism, it appeared, was articulated in a distinctively South African idiom in the "voice of a green snake."³

It was an idiom not altogether unprecedented in the history of Buddhism. Monks were known to convert snakes, or *naga*, to the Buddha *dharma* since the snake was that form most frequently assumed by local deities. As Bernard Faure observed, "the legitimizing role of the converted *naga* as guardian of a particular territory" was well-documented in the case of Indian Theravadin Buddhism. For example, the *naga* Mucalinda protected the Buddha from a storm by providing the shelter of his seven-fold hood shortly after Gautama was enlightened. As I

indicate in Chapter Six, a *naga* instructed the founder of Madhyamaka Buddhism, even giving rise to his name, Nagarjuna.⁴

The "flight" of Buddhism into Africa suggested that the Triple Gem was not only the artifice of a material and literary accumulation, therefore. Nor was Buddhism solely mediated by travellers and linguists, Unitarians and Theosophists, and Indian and Chinese immigrants. The thread of Buddha, *dharma*, and *sangha*, beginning with its Tibetan Vajrayana expression, was becoming as South African as the snake and the "sangoma." In fact, wrote Sheila Fugard, the entire continent was commensurate with a Tibetan Buddhist influence. Since Africa was not removed from the scope of enlightenment, one could not, she argued,

discount that the flowering of tribal cultures could ripen within the dimensions of Buddhist Tantra. Sangomas, both in Durban and in Johannesburg, have taken some Buddhist teachings. The idea of Black powerful yogis is close to a reality. In an Africa that seems darkened by political unrest, the principle of enlightenment will surely manifest to countless suffering beings, for the cessation of that suffering.⁵

A "Tibetan Diaspora," argued one Kagyudpa monk to a Cape Town correspondent in 1971, was now beginning to "fertilize streams that would lead to a great renaissance of thought and inner realization" in Africa. Emerging in the context of a particular expression of suffering (*dukkha*), these Tantric resources would, the monk stressed, help heal the land.⁶

The Tibetan Diaspora, and the flight of Padmasambhava, as I suggested, predated Lama Ole Nyadhl's visit by some years. The Tibetan Friendship Group, for example, popularized Tibetan Buddhist practice in South Africa beginning in 1969. In that year a Vajrayana Buddhist circle consisting of about ten members also started to meet in Cape Town under the direction of an elderly man, known

by his refuge name as Karma Chopel. Advertised in the British Buddhist journal, *Middle Way*, the "Mahayana Buddhist group of the Kagyudpa Realization," which was linked to the groups established by Swami Venkatesananda, included in its practice "*puja* and *mantra* chanting." In Durban, earlier in the same year, and in the same journal, another South African Buddhist, Karma Kunchok Sherub, advertised a Tibetan Buddhist group of the same lineage that began after he spoke of the *dharma* at a meeting of the Durban Divine Life Society.⁷

In Johannesburg, an ex-policeman and insurance agent in his late fifties, Geoff Hardacre, who took refuge along with Karma Kunchok Sherub when they met the Gyalwa Karmapa in Europe, and who presented the Karmapa with a sacred South African seashell that "strangely recollected Tantric symbolization," extended the teaching of Kagyudpa Vajrayana to about thirty-five regular meditators. Later to become the Karmapa's representative in South Africa, Hardacre emigrated from Zimbabwe where a Buddhist group was founded in the 1950s in Umtali. When its founder died, a group was started after Harold Farmer spoke about Buddhism at a symposium of world religions at Swami Nisrayasananda's ashram in Bulawayo. That group, which included Theosophists, Quakers, and a number of people interested in Yoga, provided the resources for a three week Vipassana meditation retreat in 1974 led by the Thai Theravadin teacher, Dhiravamsa, and two years later, for a two week retreat led by Dinah Dey.⁸

As centers of Tibetan sacrality, and as South African expressions of Tibetan teaching, I document the origins and practices of these groups, suggesting that they culminated in the creation of a permanent Tibetan Buddhist retreat at Nieu Bethesda in the Great Karoo in 1981. However, the Kagyudpa Samye Ling center in Nieu Bethesda was only one moment in an increasingly imaginative, innovative recreation of Tibetan Buddhism in southern Africa. By 1992, for example, the Gelugpa or "Yellow Hat" lineage founded by Tsongkhapa

as one of four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism began meeting in Johannesburg with the promise that a teacher, Geshe Damcho, would reside there permanently or at least for a significant period each year.

In recovering the thread that constituted Tibetan lineages in this country, however, I also focus on that aspect of the tradition around which Buddhist practice revolved. I explore the concern for the healing of body and mind that both South African sangoma and Tibetan *tulku* advanced. Addressing the emergence of more recent Buddhist groups in South Africa, including the Soka Gakkai of Nichiren Daishonin, the Fellowship of World Buddhists, and the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, I also review the work of "engaged" Buddhists that attempted to heal what Sheila Fugard called the "countless sufferings of political" rather than psychological or bodily disorder. It was from within this context, out of which Chinese and Indian Buddhists emerged earlier, that the jewel of *dharma* was wrested. While Lama Ole Nyadhl argued, therefore, that the Drakensberg had "taken on the color of quartz," and that the stones had "changed into bells, *dorjes* and lotus flowers, all powerful symbols of Tibetan Buddhism," this Western Land was clearly not what some thought the "Pure Land" would be like. The Pure Land, the Western paradise of Padmasambhava, turned out to be a place of untold suffering: South Africa was a space where *dukkha* was pervasive.⁹

I. Organizing Karma Rigdor

The Secretary of the Oranjezicht Ratepayers' Association was a competent linguist. He was conversant in German and Greek. He taught himself Turkish and Sanskrit, and studied Egyptian, translating sections of the *Book of the Dead* into English. While financial editor of the *Cape Times*, he published a glossary of Pali terms. But, at his death in 1976, he was remembered foremost neither as

a linguist nor as a financier. Karma Tenpi Nyima, as he was called after taking refuge in the Triple Gem of Buddha, *dharma*, and *sangha*, was honored as one of the first of a growing number of South African Buddhists to practice in the lineage of the Karmapa.

Because of an earlier interest in the Theosophical Society, the Freemasons, the Rosicrucians, and the Tibetan Friendship Group, Karma Tenpi Nyima began at the age of sixty-seven what was to be a lasting correspondence with a Tibetan Buddhist of the Kagyudpa lineage, the reform School of the Nyingmapa Order founded by the Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava. Fleeing Tibet after the Chinese invasion in the 1950s, Tenpi Nyima's correspondent, the seventh incarnate Thrangu Rinpoche, moved to Gangtok, Sikkim. At the beginning of their correspondence, in 1970, he was Abbot in charge of the Dharma Chakra Temple at Rumtek, where both the head of the lineage, His Holiness the Karmapa, and the Karmapa's confidant of twelve years, Sister Karma Khechog Palmo, were also resident.¹⁰

The Rinpoche was pleased, Sister Palmo translated, that "on this stormy ocean of *samsara*, the nursery of the world, [their] two ships had collided." In response to Karma Tenpi Nyima's first letters about the childlessness of his daughter, Rinpoche promised, "by the blessings of the life of chastity of the incarnate lamas," the cessation of her suffering. Learning of the recent death of Karma Tenpi's wife, however, the Rinpoche and Sister Palmo assured him that they would "light lamps before the *bodhi* Tree." They would "burn sacred lotus paper" and carry out other ceremonies at the same time as the South African burial. For the grave they would send the financier a "small printed *sutra* and seeds." His request for help with visual aids for what Evans-Wentz, in his *Yoga and the Secret Doctrine*, said were the first steps on the path of Buddhist meditation, required, however, some detailed explanation of the color and *mudra* symbolism of *dharma*, *sambhoga*, and *nirmana-kaya*.¹¹

Concern with the healing of body and with the organization of mind reflected a range of practical considerations. What, for example, inquired Karma Tenpi Nyima, was the most productive posture for the body in order to focus the mind? And how could one organize a private domestic place to conform to Buddhist architectural space? What should his shrine room contain aside from a Tibetan prayer flag, *thanka*, and Buddha-*rupa*? Karma Tenpi Nyima was also interested in ways in which the Buddhist philosophy of *sunyata* compared to the Jewish concept of *bin* or the Egyptian notion of *nut*. Sustaining his interest in Egyptian mythology, he wanted to know if the crossed-armed *mudra* of the *dharma-kaya* was in any way analogous to Osirian iconography. Was the persistence of the *bodhic* body in the condition of *samsara* consistent with the Horus-Seth cycle in Egyptian myth? Did the dichotomy in color symbolism of the northern and southern kingdoms of Egypt correspond to the red and black colors of the crown in the Chenresig (Avalokitesvara) *pūja* he was practicing? And was his focus on the toes during meditation, a method consonant with Egyptian techniques, consistent with Tibetan Vajrayana teaching, that focussed on the navel? Questions regarding the comparison of practice and posture, and the ways in which one might visualize the many Buddhist *Bodhisattvas* that were integral to Vajrayana, were accompanied by requests for help with the pronunciation of terms central to Tibetan *mantra*. These included concepts contained in his practice of the hundred syllable purification *mantra* for the explication of Karma; the *Jetsum Dolma* offering prayer; the hymn to the Green Tara, the female aspect of the *Bodhisattva* of compassion, Chenresig; and his meditation on the *Dhyani Buddha*, *Dorje Sempa* (*Vajra Sattva*).¹²

Karma Tenpi Nyima was not alone in considering these questions of correct practice essential in order to breach the geographical distance that separated South African Buddhists from Tibetan centers of learning. In Jerusalem at this time, a twenty-seven year-old South African student, and member of the Tibetan Friendship Group, Karma Namgyal Wangchuk, terminated rabbinic

training in order to travel to the temple at Rumtek to take refuge with the Karmapa. In Johannesburg, an architect in his early fifties, Karma Chenko, was similarly concerned with converting domestic place into a sacred space for Kagyudpa practice. A Catholic and, like Karma Tenpi Nyima, a Freemason, Karma Chenko encountered objections from his family for his decision to correspond with a Tibetan Buddhist in Tibet. He rented a room in which to continue meditation and *mantra* practice. The sacralization of space was accompanied, however, by the ritualization of everyday activity. Describing how the sacred became disguised in the profane, he wrote to Karma Tenpi Nyima in April 1972 about his meditations on the Tara *puja*:

To her we can offer our food before eating; our defecation as ritual purification; our footsteps coming and going as a further progress along the path of *Dhammapada*. Her voice wakes us in the morning; as we clothe ourselves we imagine being robed in her garments of glory and the six bone ornaments of the six *paramitas*.¹³

Suggestive of the six virtuous perfections to which the *Bodhisattva* aspired, his meditation was also indicative of some of the ways in which, through domestic ritual, the body could become the locus of a transcendent order, or what social theorist Pierre Bourdieu called *habitus*. It was an attentiveness to the quotidian that was to become familiar to many Buddhists in the context of practice on the periphery of the Buddhist world. That there were more than a few people interested in this form of practice in the country became evident, however, after Karma Chenko placed an advertisement in the local press for the first meeting of the Kagyudpa Dharma group. Receiving its mandate from His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa in September of 1971, the group became known as the Karma Rigdor, its name derived from the Karmapa, who, like the Dalai Lama, was believed to be an emanation of the compassionate *Bodhisattva* Chenresig.¹⁴

Within a month, a weekly meditation meeting was established along satsang lines, either opening with the Hymn to Tara or with the chanting of the *Heart Sutra*. This was followed with the prayer to the lineage of Kagyudpa gurus; the prayer for all sentient beings; and the Sanskrit *mantra* of Chenresig, *om mani padme hum* (hail to the jewel in the Lotus Sutra) that was chanted in concert with a recording. However, the group, as Karma Chenko noted, was "not characteristically Buddhist, let alone Mahayana." In fact, Karma Chenko wrote, it was forced to draw on Theravadin sources and the writings of the German-born Buddhologist, Edward Conze, since "some of the members are not really interested in the Tibetan slant." Similarly, when he addressed a meeting of the Pretoria Theosophical Society, introducing both the elementary principles of Buddhist philosophy and the devotional practice characteristic of Tibetan Vajrayana, Karma Chenko observed that while "the Theravadins objected to the devotional aspect," the Theosophists, "more interested in Yoga, thought the devotional side watered down."¹⁵

While expanding Karma Rigdor and continuing to introduce Kagyudpa practice to groups like the Theosophists and the Hindu school of Sivananda, Karma Chenko described himself as a sort of "John the Baptist to the Lama-to-be." In Cape Town, however, financier Karma Tenpi Nyima considered his role as more of a panacea to inherited misrepresentation than a prophetic witness to expanding dialogue. "You must realize," he wrote Karma Chenko, "we are in an historically new situation - a god-king, in the West known only by fairy tales and skew reports from travellers, has taken refuge in a country which," he conceded, "may, however, enable his circle to gain a new foothold."¹⁶

The Cape Town Karma Rigdor was initiated by Karma Tenpi Nyima, together with the Theosophist and Tibetan Friendship Group president, Dolma Chunzom, soon after the inauguration of the Johannesburg Karma Rigdor group. By April of 1972 some twenty people sought refuge in the transmission of its teaching of the central "supreme seal" of Mahamudra (*phyag rgya chen po*). By

May the group began both the Tara *puja* and the meditation on the White Buddha of Purity, *Dorje Sempa*, that were integral to the extended Tibetan refuge. In June they set up "an altar carrying candles and the *mandala* offering." Transcending space through the synchronization of time once again, the meetings were adjusted to accord with those of the temple at Rumtek, and with the wishes of the Karmapa. Special ritual events, like Wesak and Losar, were also commemorated simultaneously with the Tibetan calendar. Even the marriage ceremony of Karma Tenpi Nyima, for which the appropriate Buddhist texts were given to Dolma Chunzom, was celebrated in Tibet with concurrent prayers and a new name offered to the bride by Thrangu Rinpoche.¹⁷

Both groups lacked a permanent meeting place, however, "a simple chapel where things can be done properly." The Cape Town Karma Rigdor group operated from the residence of one of its members. In Johannesburg, Karma Rigdor met in rooms above the Theosophical Society. Neither Karma Tenpi Nyima nor Karma Chenko received the special initiations that would permit them to teach and guide effectively. They depended on communication with the Karmapa, Sister Palmo, or the Abbot at Rumtek Temple, supplemented by reading the works of Western scholars of Tibetan Buddhism, including Lama Anagarika Govinda, Herbert Guenther, Alexander David-Neel, and W. Y. Evans-Wentz. However, they regarded initiation to be crucial. As Karma Chenko wrote in June of 1971, "I sincerely hope that when I receive initiation I shall be given some instruction in the communication of *dharma*. A saffron robe and the bestowal of authority would help." He hoped that "when the time was, ripe, I or someone else will go to Rumtek for initiation and bring back to this land the spiritual treasure it requires so badly."¹⁸

By July of that year, however, the Johannesburg organization divided into two groups.¹⁹ Karma Chenko remained with the Karma Rigdor Chakra, but a younger woman, in her mid-forties, began a more meditation-oriented group under the name of Karma Rigdor Realization. Chimey Dolka, the "deathless

white mother," as the group's leader was called, received initiation after travelling first to the Kagyudpa retreat center in Samye Ling, Scotland, and then to Mysore in India, in 1974. In July of 1975 she also took to wearing the robe, not the saffron robe of a Theravadin renunciate, which Karma Chenko had desired, but the maroon robe of a Tibetan *bhikkhuni* and a white surplice reminiscent of her Catholic upbringing. Karma Chimey Dolka, her husband Wim, and seven others then established a permanent Buddhist retreat center, the first in South Africa. "Nestled in the foothills of the Magaliesberg," reported one newspaper, the *Gompa*, called "Serenity Farm," was not only a sacred place on the periphery of commercial space. It was a retreat on the margin of chronological time. It was, as a writer for *The Star* newspaper put it, "light years away."¹⁹

With private meditation beginning at four in the morning, followed by a day of intermittent labor, life at Serenity Farm, Roger Dean noted, "seemed all sweet and squatting." For Chimey Dolka, however, arduous discipline was central to the experiment in Buddhist practice. Indeed, far from an outlandish experiment, a foreign religious ritual in South Africa, arduous Buddhist practice was a discipline that "led me closer to Christianity." However, for many observers Buddhist practice appeared distinctively foreign and alien. Buddhism and Christianity were incompatible. Buddhists, some South Africans noted, were even a threat to the security of the Christian state. For example, in January of 1972 the State Security Police questioned Karma Chenko in Johannesburg. This inquest arose, he recalled, because of comments made in the local press by a "long-haired, Buddhist film-maker," Peter Prowse. Prowse was denied access to an hotel as a consequence of his apparently offensive appearance. Although Karma Chenko published his disapproval of the "freaky Buddhist," he asserted that the issue would not have arisen if the man was "a Catholic or a Latter Day Saint." Clearly, Karma Chenko felt that Buddhists were being victimized in South Africa.²⁰

When Karma Chenko's request for a visa for Sister Palmo to visit South Africa was turned down by state security procedures in 1972, his convictions were confirmed. Presumably, not even the possibility of a visit from a Buddhist *Bodhisattva* could secure entry into the sanctity of the state. These incidents were not the first occasions when Buddhists were perceived either as exotic or aberrant, and it would not be the last time that the government intervened in their affairs. Karma Chenko felt, however, that "this sort of religious discrimination" could not be tolerated. "I am sure that any good Nationalist Party member would be shocked to the marrow," he wrote Karma Tenpi Nyima. "It certainly can in no way relate to the safety or the security of the state." Suggesting that they consider an appeal, "presented through some reasonably responsible government to the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations," he concluded in terms reminiscent of the martyr, rather than the prophet: "For myself I am quite unafraid since there is no self that can be threatened ... the time has come to show courage and determination."²¹

In an article for an international Buddhist journal, published in May of 1972, Karma Chenko argued that South Africans had a "blue-print" for the practice of *dharma* in this context of statutory denial. They were "prepared to lay down [their] lives for the *dharma*," heralded the editor. For intimidation was "a call to Karma, to Walk On, wideawake into the Eternal Now." It was, Karma Chenko suggested, an eternal *samsaric* condition that the Buddhist monk "Nagarjuna had called Nirvana."²²

Early South African interest in Tibetan powers of healing, therefore, were followed by intimations of Buddhist teachings concerned with death and dying. For Karma Tenpi Nyima, one of the first practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism in South Africa, these intimations, reflected in the "*Tibetan Book of the Dead*" and in the in between states known as the *Bardo*, were reinforced in personal experience. In 1974, Wood Tiger Year, Thrangu Rinpoche, his teacher and confidant since 1971, sent Karma Tenpi Nyima *prasad*, blessing medicines, as

well as a number of *rilnak* pills and incense to purify both body and shrine-room. He gave the dying man instructions on how to place the Dorje Chang relics of the Celestial Buddha on the top of the head. These instructions and calls for the benevolent influence of the *Dug Karma mantra* in the Fervent Prayer served to prepare for Karma Tenpi Nyima's immanent death.²³

Four years later, in 1978, another set of Buddhist relics and another Buddhist death was celebrated. In India, Karma Tsultim Khechog Palmo's ashes were scattered in sacred rivers and parts of her body were used in the creation of sacred objects. "Demonstrating that the veil between life and death was slender," the relics of Sister Palmo were important to South African Buddhists. South Africans were reminded of saintly power, however, not only by Buddhist reliquary. "Most speak frequently of her appearance in meditation and dreams," wrote the member of a Port Elizabeth Karma Rigdor group. Sister Palmo, in spite of the state's initial refusal, visited South Africa to promote the work of the Tibetan Friendship Group and the Kagyudpa Karma Rigdor. Her visit for the first time gave the groups in Johannesburg and Cape Town the monastic robe that many argued was required to transmit the treasure of the three jewels.²⁴

II. Taking Refuge with Sister Palmo

A fully ordained Vajrayana Buddhist *gelongma*, sixty-one year old Karma Tsultim Kechog Palmo arrived in South Africa in 1972. Her mission, to "raise funds for Tibetan refugees who were escaping from communists," noted the *Sunday Times*, was surely no threat to state security. Reports of her visit, however, were consistently indexed against binarisms of the aberrant: Newspapers carried leaders like "Meditation and Mao" or "Western Logic and Eastern Mysticism." The perdurable exoticism of the Orient was also extended in

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the press. The *Cape Argus*, for example, construed "Celibacy and Saffron" to be a statement of fashion in its Woman's Page.²⁵

For Mrs Bedi, however, the visit to South Africa was viewed neither as an attempt to convert communists nor to herald new custom. Her visit was organized "to help with the work of *dharma*." Sister Palmo would "talk of the teachings of the Buddha of the Mahayana Path" to both Karma Rigdor and Theosophical groups, who pioneered the work of her Tibetan Friendship trust; she would give refuge and provide initiation into certain teachings of the Kagyudpa; and she would help to realize the compassion of the *Bodhisattva* in southern Africa. These aims were consonant with the life of the *siddhi* whose name she had taken: Before Buddhism was transmitted to Tibet, an Indian princess renowned for her beauty and intelligence, but suffering from a debilitating disease, renounced royalty to devote herself to the study of *dharma*. Meditating for several years on the eleven-faced, thousand-armed form of the *Bodhisattva* of compassion, Chenresig, the woman was eventually healed of body and enlightened of mind. She attributed her health to a vision of the *Bodhisattva*. Subsequently, in Tibet, the practice of Chenresig visualization and fasting rituals (*smiyung gnas*) became associated with the method of the princess, who was known as Gelongma Palmo (*dge slong ma dpal mo*).²⁶

It was this form of Buddhist Chenresig practice that Sister Palmo taught in South Africa during her visit. In Johannesburg, and in the Indian community of Lenasia, for example, nine people took refuge in Buddha, *dharma*, and *sangha*, and five were initiated into the Kagyudpa lineage. Most were members of Chimey Dolka's meditation group. Karma Chenko thought some unsuitable. At least one, he wrote Karma Tenpi Nyima, was misusing drugs. In Durban, at a meeting with members of Karma Rigdor under the guidance of Karma Kunchok Sherub, five people took refuge, including the Indian Natal Buddhist Society president, L. Nagamuthu. A German-speaking member of Lama Anagarika Govinda's Arya Maitreya Mandala in South Africa, who was linked to the Order

of the Rose to which Karma Tenpi Nyima belonged, was also initiated into the Kagyudpa lineage with which Govinda was at one time associated. A professor of zoology at the University of Natal, John Poynton, although he did not consider himself a Buddhist, was given the Jetsum Dolma Perfection of Wisdom initiation.²⁷

In Cape Town, at a meeting with members of both the Theosophical Society and Cape Town Karma Rigdor at "Watersedge," about thirty people took refuge in front of a shrine with candles, flowers, an image of Sakyamuni Buddha, a photograph of the Gyalwa Karmapa, and offerings of *torma*, fruit, and cake. And at a retreat in the Cederberg mountains, some retreatants, including Karma Tenpi Nyima and Karma Samten Phuntsok, received the secret teachings of Dorje Phagmo. Completing her meditation on the Amitabha Buddha, the Buddha of Boundless Light, one participant suggested that archetypal "tantric forms" appeared not only to have been transported to southern Africa. They had begun to "mingle with the archetypal images of Africa." The Amitabha meditation provided a sort of panacea to the "dark and twisted roots of racism [that] continue to proliferate."²⁸

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In Port Elizabeth, where a Buddhist meditation group met for some time under the guidance of a Theosophist in her nineties, whose house "resembled a Theosophical relic," more people formally took refuge with Gelongma Palmo. Most were members of this early, "non-sectarian sitting," and included a young female student of Swami Venkatesananda, an elderly couple, and "a woman with spiritualist and mediumistic tendencies." It was while she was in Port Elizabeth, however, that Sister Palmo was called upon not only to give refuge and help with the visualization of the lineage of the Kagyudpa Lamas for Karma Rigdor. Continuing the practice of her namesake, Gelongma Palmo, she supplemented the teachings on enlightening the mind with rituals relying on the compassion of Chenrezig to safeguard the passage of the post-mortem body. The state required a Buddhist authority to perform the last rites ritual for a Chinese seaman, Ching

Tim-hau, who had died whilst in Port Elizabeth. Since she was the only proficient person in the country at that time, Sister Palmo undertook to perform the rites associated with the Tibetan "*Book of the Dead*." ²⁹

While police arrested three men, Sister Palmo prepared for the Tibetan rituals associated with navigating the consciousness of the deceased through the periods of the *Bardo*. However, because she was only initiated into the teachings of the Tibetan ritual up to a certain point, it was agreed that in Sikkim Abbot Thrangu Rinpoche would simultaneously conduct the body to the new womb. Rituals of dying and rebirth continued to reflect this pattern, telescoping the distance of space by the synchronization of time. In 1978, for example, two members of Karma Rigdor, Karma Samten Phuntsok and Karma Dechen conducted another burial in Port Elizabeth. A Buddhist exchange student from Hawaii had died in the city and his family required, along with the traditional offerings of flowers and fruit, that the *Heart Sutra* be recited. At the same time that Tibetan medicines and *mantras* were placed in the coffin by South African Buddhists, however, a corresponding "Zen ceremony was held in Hawaii." ³⁰

Karma Samten Phuntsok, we recall, was the travelling companion of Theosophist and Tibetan Friendship Group president, Dolma Chunzom. Karma Dechen was a long-standing member of the Port Elizabeth Karma Rigdor. She had taken refuge with Sister Palmo in 1972. Before that, in the late 1950s, she studied Hinduism and visited the birth-place of Swami Sivananda in south India. Fascinated with Patanjali's Yoga *sutras*, she also began a translation of Christopher Isherwood's *Bhagavad Gita* and started to practice meditation in the school of Ramakrishna. Having taken refuge, however, Karma Dechen wrote for the South African Buddhist Journal, *Bodhisattva Path*, that this was a different sort of commitment, "a sacred trust." It made one a "co-worker on the *Bodhisattva* path and also a recipient of all the help and power that comes from the Buddha and the *Bodhisattvas*." ³¹

Refuge, Karma Dechen argued, was for Westerners, therefore, perhaps "more intense, less natural than in a Buddhist country," where many aspects of Buddhism were domesticated. If in Tibet, for example, refuge and the *sangha* looked like they were laicized, in South Africa, she argued, refuge operated at a sort of "monastic level." The commitment to Triple Gem was "intellectually tough." This commitment, Karma Dechen conceded, was mediated by the fact that she and many other meditators were baptized Roman Catholic. Perpetuating earlier analogies, the exoticism of Buddhism, she noted, was to some extent ameliorated by familiar Catholic discipline. Tibetan forms of Buddhist Vajrayana, colored with attention to ritual detail, thus appeared consonant with Catholic practice in ways more immediately apparent than less ritualistic forms of Theravadin Buddhism. Buddhism was articulated by some South Africans, therefore, within the limits of Catholic consent.

For Karma Dechen, the primary influence in the move from Catholic, to Hindu, and then to Buddhist teaching, however, was not really refuge. Commitment to the Buddhist path, and eventually to Buddhist precepts, was based on the spiritual links that bound one to a teacher. The perception of this karmic link was reflected in the spiritual biography, or *namthar*, of Sister Palmo that Karma Dechen published in 1984. It was this bond with Sister Palmo that led Karma Dechen, in 1973, along with the Theosophist, Dolma Chundzom, to visit the *gelongma* at the principal European Kagyudpa temple, at Samye Ling, in Scotland, where she met Akong Rinpoche. Two years later, however, Karma Dechen followed Sister Palmo to America for the Karmapa's tour of the United States. After the Karmapa chanted the refuge and *Bodhisattva* vows, bestowed merit, and empowered the audience in Mahamudra, she was introduced to the Vajra Master.

Presenting the Karmapa the ceremonial *katha* along with Karma Dechen, however, were the Beat poets, Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Her introduction to the Karmapa together with these poets was no accident, for

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Karma Dechen was also a poet, a "poet of Africa." Known by her refuge name as Karma Dechen, Sheila Fugard was aware, however, that Africa was "a world of harshness." She asked the Karmapa for his predictions for the land:

This Guru, who had witnessed Tsurpha overrun by the Red Guard, replied: Suffering is inherent in life. Buddha is the remedy for suffering. Know that at some time the consciousness of a Buddha will awaken Africa.³²

Later, at the Nyingmapa center in Berkeley, Karma Deshen took the Buddhist precepts. It was important, she felt, to articulate the desire to live a life of ethical correctness. Buddhist practice required "having to struggle hard at defining compassion." It implied also, "as a Western Buddhist," she asserted, that one "deal with social issues." "We cannot just go into a three year retreat. We have also got to deal with the very real problems of South Africa - hunger, poverty, education." Buddhism provided, therefore, not only a path for "dealing compassionately with the difficulties that we all have in modern life." Buddhism necessitated social activism. "Otherwise," noted Fugard, "it will be a very arid Buddhism."³³

Compassion for the corruption and healing of body, which is associated in Tibetan Vajrayana with both Chenresig and with the blue, celestial Medicine Buddha, merged with political and social concerns in Fugard's fiction. Her first novel, for example, *The Castaways*, published in 1972, was a sort of "Buddhist allegory," a complex *koan* on both the shipwreck of *dharma* in South Africa and on the healing of the physical and political body in this country. It was a narrative, Rosemary Gray argued, that was "a meditation on spiritual and political power ... which anticipates a future for South Africa that is little short of apocalyptic."³⁴

The protagonist of Fugard's novel, (Christian Jordaan,) is treated for hallucinations at the Post Berkeley Mental Hospital, an asylum that refers to the

name of the vessel on which Jordaan is shipwrecked off the Pondoland coast. He escapes from the hospital and returns to the site of the wreck where he attempts to murder a man, Choma, for his inability to "seek *satori* through action." Jordaan's "delusion" is articulated in the voice of his "spiritual guide," a Buddhist priest whom doctors attempt to erase with "electrodes at the temple," at the "*stupa*" of Jordaan's mind. Ironically, what the asylum assumes to be their patient's insanity is what Jordaan perceives to be his most sane aspect. It is the Buddhist's sanity that provides a sound-board for Jordaan's "madness." "I didn't mention the Buddhist," the shipwrecked man reflects, "for if they were to steal him from me I would be lost [because] only his saffron robe covers my fear." It is the sanity of the Buddhist priest, described both as a male and as a "white-bearded wonder of a woman," who "survived because she was aberrant," because "she twisted her roots into Africa," and became black, moreover, who frustrates Jordaan's attempts to murder Choma. As one interpreter argued, it is "the endless circle of violence and counter-violence that the Buddhist shows Jordaan he must transcend."³⁵

At the end of the novel the Buddhist figure disappears, leaving Christian Jordaan alone to "progress in the knowledge of the void." The decline of the Buddha in Fugard's novel gave rise to speculation that, as a reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* noted, "perhaps the Buddhist had no place in today's South Africa." As the veiled voice of the Buddhist in the narrative, and the presence of Sister Palmo in South Africa suggested, however, Buddhism clearly had entered this space. Buddhism traversed South Africa when Padmasambhava undertook his mythic flight into Africa as a rainbow; it penetrated the region along with Siamese Buddhists on the *Dos Milagros* in 1686; and it sought out southern mountains in the 1930s with Theosophists. Tibetan Buddhism had even founded a "new house of prayer" in the Karoo Sneeuberg.³⁶

III. Building Nieu Bethesda Samye Ling

Named after the first Buddhist temple in Tibet, Nieu Bethesda Samye Ling was founded by a former professor of criminology at the University of Cape Town, Rob Nairn. It was a place, Nairn wrote, that manifested a particular and powerful energy that retreatants needed "to develop a sensitivity to" and "learn to respond to and work with." "It was a magical place," suggested one of the early residents, where people could experiment with "harnessing and focussing some of the raw and potent power of Africa."³⁷

The choice of Nieu Bethesda as a center of Tibetan Buddhist practice in South Africa was quite arbitrary, however. Sheila Fugard originally suggested the village, famous for its Owl House, because it was so isolated, but also because of its centrality mid-way between Karma Rigdor in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and Johannesburg. It was attractive, as one of the first residents recalled, because "people there were already used to eccentrics." It was a choice confirmed, moreover, by the visit of the Tibetan Kagyudpa teacher, Karma Sonam Senge Gelong, who came to South Africa in April of 1981.³⁸

Early residents of Samye Ling were not all that eccentric, however. After its inauguration in 1981, and the appointment by the Sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa of Akong Rinpoche as director in August of 1983, the first five resident Buddhists at Samye Ling included three persons over forty: a criminologist; his mother, who had lived at the Theosophical headquarters in Adyar, India, and who had been National President of the Theosophical society in Zimbabwe in the early sixties; and an ex-Catholic teacher and potter who found the "organized discipline and solitude" of Samye Ling appealing.³⁹

Along with another early resident, a dressmaker in her late twenties who took refuge with Akong Rinpoche in 1983 when she received the *dharma* name Karma Chinley Wangmo, most of the residents met Nairn in Cape Town after he

began a Buddhist group comprising about thirty-five people interested in Vipassana meditation. However, Nairn had explored a number of Asian philosophies since the early 1940s, studying Vedānta and becoming a disciple of Krishnamurti. After the visit of Dhiravamsa and Dinah Dey to Zimbabwe, and his meeting with the Dalai Lama in Nepal in 1963, however, Nairn's commitment to Buddhist practice increased. In part this was because, unlike Hindu methods of meditation, that required the need for belief, he argued, the "Buddhist system" did not demand that one assume another faith.⁴⁰

By 1981, however, following Rob Nairn's return from a trip around America with the Karmapa, the Cape Town group was renamed Karma Dzong by the Karmapa's representative, Geoff Hardacre; its practice became increasingly Kagyudpa oriented. It was a commitment to this lineage that inspired Nairn's decision to move to the Karoo, and by January of 1983, during Akong Rinpoche's second visit to Nieu Bethesda, to encourage Samye Ling to become an affiliate of the Kagyudpa lineage. An association with that lineage implied not only that Akong Rinpoche would provide support and teaching for the Karoo community, and Tibetan Buddhists in South Africa generally, but that he would be consulted about the teachers who taught at the center, although they would not necessarily have to be Kagyudpa or Tibetan Buddhists. The number of houses owned by the center at this time increased to four, including a "Karma Store," and the number of residents to twelve, although during retreats sometimes as many as eighty people were accommodated. Most people, however, did not regard themselves as Buddhist. "Quite a few of the people [went] away with a far deeper understanding of their own religion" than they did of Buddhism. This, suggested Nairn, was entirely consonant with the Buddhist *dharma*. The "true Buddhist," he wrote, had "no desire to convert." On this basis, the Buddhists were happy to agree to the demands of the small Dutch Reformed Church community at Nieu Bethesda that there would be no attempt to proselytize.⁴¹

Except for times of retreat, that became increasingly oriented towards Vajrayana, often with entire sessions devoted to meditation and *mantra* practice, the center was not spatially constructed in order to replicate monastic organization. However, the separation of shrine room and kitchen, in houses respectively named "Karma Rigdor" and "Tara," did suggest an attempt to create an architecture of place that conformed to sacred space. The shrine room, for example, consisted of *thankas* reflecting the lineage of Kagyudpa lamas (including the blue Dorje Chang, and his disciples Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa, Milerepa, Gompopa, and the first Karmapa). *Rupas* of the Amitabha Buddha, the Buddha of Boundless Light, as well as the Gautama Buddha in the earth-touching *mudra*, were placed in the room.⁴²

If space was configured in part to duplicate Tibetan sacrality, in the lineage of lamas in the shrine room, and in the naming of houses in the center, time also was synchronized to conform to a Tibetan calendar. On the new moon and full moons, residents would take the five precepts. If anyone known to the *sangha* had died, the Amitabha *puja* was performed at full moon. Wesak and Losar were also celebrated in concert with the Tibetan year. Some retreatants kept a copy of Tibetan ritual days. Since Rob Nairn undertook to wind the church clock, "a job which he took very seriously," even the Dutch Reformed community in Nieu Bethesda appeared to be in ritual communion with Tibetan time.⁴³

The regime of daily meditation practice began with a chanting and visualization meditation, or *puja*, early in the morning, followed by an hour of mindful sitting based on the prescriptions of the classic *Satipatthana-sutta*. The day was free for labor, comprised for some of social work in the community, (14) including a soup kitchen, a pottery, the Karma Store, and a needlework center. Lunch was held communally, and the day ended with an evening *puja*. Three or four times a month more intensive meditation sessions were also held, and these often extended throughout the night. On the eighth day of the new moon some

15 retreatants would conduct the *puja* of the Medicine Buddha, and on the tenth day, the Guru Rinpoche Padmasambhava *puja*. However, practice often focussed on the Chenresig *puja* and *mantra*. In part this was because the *puja* required no authorization or empowerment to teach. Chanted in Tibetan, a language most residents could not read, the Chenresig *mantra*, addressed as it was to the *Bodhisattva* of compassion, attempted to redress the suffering prevalent in the southern African context. As resident Karma Chinley Wangmo noted, the Chenresig *puja* and *mantra* were employed "to generate compassion to benefit the whole of South Africa, because, according to Akong Rinpoche, there was going to be drought - because of the bad use of the land; because of the gold mining. So Chenresig was to help restore the balance."⁴⁴

Prostration and practice to Tibetan Buddhas was affected by the Karoo context in other ways. Following the precedent set by Padmasambhava, "local deities and nature gods were placated" by ritual offerings and symbolic gestures in order to "help with the rain." These rain *pujas*, "which definitely worked," became part of a developing Tantric practice at Nieu Bethesda Samye Ling. Some residents, however, thought the specifically Tibetan *puja* and *mantra* practice "strange and alien," but conceded, nonetheless, that belief in the ritual was not as important as the power that was generated by its practice.⁴⁵

As the population of the retreat varied over the years, so too did reasons for individual commitment to it. Some retreatants, as I suggested, sought the isolation of Nieu Bethesda and the chance to "withdraw from the world" in a context that provided discipline and structure. Others, by contrast, sought to engage the world more fully by drawing on the symbolic and ritual resources that the community and its Tibetan teachings afforded a country so filled with suffering or *dukkha*. The function of the community, and "the bottom line of Buddhism," reported Katrin Auf der Heyde, was "to help others lead a happier life. That's why we need to work towards social reconstruction."⁴⁶

A few members, dissatisfied with Christian dogma, came to Nieu Bethesda for the *dharma*, took refuge in the *sangha*, Buddha, and the lineage of the Kagyudpa lamas, and then engaged in rituals of marriage. Like earlier burials, these marriage rituals were performed in accordance with Tibetan custom and in concert with the auspicious days of a Tibetan calendar. The focus of commitment, whether in the strangeness of ritual, albeit often mediated, as the composition of the community suggested, by an earlier association with Theosophy, Vedanta, Transcendental Meditation, or the familiarity of Catholic practice, or in the teachings of the compassionate Buddha and the truth of Buddhist *dharma*, was nevertheless most frequently articulated in terms of an appeal to the auspices of *sangha*. In particular, it was the lineage and charisma of the teacher who symbolized its transmission that provided the "real focus." Ani Sangje Choden, a South African Kagyudpa Buddhist who followed the teachings of Swami Venkatesananda, whom she had met in Durban, for example, noted that "it was the calibre of the Tibetan teachers" that impressed her most about Buddhism. Attending retreats at Nieu Bethesda Samye Ling, sometimes two a year, for almost ten years, it was being Akong Rinpoche's personal assistant that was "the turning point" in her decision to take refuge in Tibetan Buddhism.⁴⁷

A few residents pointed to the fact of an earlier birth, or the prescription of Buddhist philosophy, especially the Buddhist teaching on *samsara* and Karma, as important facets of their decision to take refuge. For most, however, the fundamental appeal of Buddhism was not the teaching, that included, at times, Tibetan language, but the practice of "working with the elements in Tibetan Tantra" as they emerged in the peculiar condition of South African time and the place of "spiritual power at Samye Ling." The focus of Chenresig practice, and on healing in general, was in this regard not unexpected.⁴⁸

Venerable Chuje Akong Rinpoche, who arrived in England in 1964 to help Trungpa Rinpoche, and who worked as an hospital porter for a short time, was a specialist in Tibetan healing. He devised a form of Buddhist practice that,

he suggested, was more akin to therapy than Tantra. Many arrivals at Samye Ling were, as resident Karma Chinley Wangmo noted, also "damaged people" who "abused drugs or had mental problems." Some were institutionalized. As an alternative regime, a different form of discipline, however, Tibetan therapy and healing did not seek to excise the Buddha from their consciousness, as the Post Berkeley Mental Hospital attempted in Fugard's earlier fiction. As Chujé Akong Rinpoche wrote, "this therapy [was] not Buddhist therapy" since "the Lord Buddha did not specifically teach it." However, since the Buddha commanded that one "should always do what is of benefit for people" this therapeutic program was not against the Buddhist principles of benevolence (*metta*) and compassion (*karuna*).⁴⁹

As Raoul Birnbaum's recent work, *The Healing Buddha* suggested, this Kagyudpa focus on healing and therapy in South Africa was entirely orthodox. Indeed, the *Nirvana-sutra* spoke of the Buddha as "attaining perfect enlightenment and becoming the supreme healer." Therefore, argued Akong Rinpoche, although unable to cure the structure of one's life, which was contingent on past Karma, therapy, of which the practice of meditation was a part, could heal the body, dismantle the "nuclear weapons in our minds," and change the habitual Karma that had accumulated from birth.⁵⁰

Comparable to Zen teachings on the Ox or Bull-herding narratives, Akong Rinpoche's "Taming the Tiger Therapy" soon became an important facet of Tibetan Vajrayana practice in South Africa. A number of workshops and retreats were held to explore this technique, including those facilitated by Edith Erwin, a teacher in Tibetan healing at the Samye Ling Temple in Scotland. A seminar on the role of compassion in medicine at the medical faculty of the University of Cape Town was also conducted by Akong Rinpoche in 1990.⁵¹

However, Karma Chinley Wangmo, one of the teachers of Kagyudpa therapy who trained under Akong Rinpoche and Edith Erwin, suggested that since it was "not really religious" and did not have to take place in a Buddhist

setting, for example, a lot of people came to these workshops who were not necessarily interested in Buddhist practice at all. "In Cape Town there are many Catholics and Jews" who participate in the "Taming the Tiger" workshops. Most of these people remained with their religion, although "sometimes people do change. They go through this big conflict [about whether to convert to Buddhism or not]. Many come because they are dissatisfied with the practical guidance, particularly in meditation training, that their own tradition provides. But Guru [Akong] Rinpoche will always say it is perfectly fine to stay with what you are doing." For some of the townspeople of Nieu Bethesda, however, it did not appear that Tibetan therapy had accomplished anything to heal either the mind's of Tibetan Buddhists or their own farmland. The land, in spite of the successes of the rain *pujas*, the townspeople asserted, remained endemically unsatisfactory. In part, asserted Katrin Auf der Heyde, that non-satisfactoriness was due to the presence of Buddhists in what was thought to be a Christian place. One resident complained:

We don't want Nieu Bethesda to become the Mecca of Buddhism. Look at the land they are buying, and they already have a shop and the pottery.... The character of the village is not to be changed in any way, least of all by the Buddhists. They can do what ever they like, as long as it is behind closed doors and a high wall. They are not to publicize their religious views. Look at them, they walk around the streets like zombies, meditating and not talking to anyone.⁵²

If the citizens of Nieu Bethesda thought the Tibetan Buddhists were "dead people made mobile by magic," Tibetan Buddhists thought that their only distinctiveness was a quiet, unassuming, but "strong belief in the power of Buddha." While the press noted, therefore, how the "Karoo town is humming to Buddhist chants," Nairn wrote that Buddhists were not hippies or zombies. "We don't wear robes

and bang tambourines." Surprisingly, obviously, he argued, "we look just like anybody else."⁵³

The focus of Tibetan Kagyudpa practice in southern Africa, at Nieu Bethesda Samye Ling, lasted a little over a decade. In 1988 Rob Nairn left the retreat center for Samye Ling Temple, in Scotland, to begin a four-year retreat so that, as Akong Rinpoche suggested, he might become a "proper teacher." With his departure, the *sangha* at the Karoo center slowly dispersed, although the shrine room remained available for retreatants through the administration of the Samye Ling Trust. With his return at the end of 1993, however, many Tibetan Buddhists in South Africa hoped that their fully initiated, indigenous teacher would provide the permanence that earlier Kagyudpa initiatives lacked. His expertise, they hoped, would also afford them the opportunity to advance practice.

The four-year, four-month, four-week retreat, that was extended by a quarter from its traditional, three-year Tibetan duration so that the twenty or so retreatants could familiarize themselves with the Tibetan language in which most practice was conducted, provided Nairn with instruction in the Six Yogas of Naropa, including the Dream; Radiant Light; Transference of Consciousness; and Mystic Heat Yogas. Specific transmission of certain teachings on the visualizations of the mind and control of the body, including a practice that consisted of sitting in the snow semi-naked, wrapped in wet sheets, and drying the sheets through inner heat, was also given, although this particular body technique, presumably, might prove less significant to the training many South Africans now hoped for in a more arid Karoo climate.⁵⁴

Travelling to Britain for four to five months every year to complete the period of preparation prior to the retreat, however, Nairn's training under some of the most experienced Tibetan lamas did provide an immediate consequence for South African practice: Since the "practices which we do, such as Chenresig," were initiated by enlightened *Bodhisattvas*, suggested Nairn, these "formula

which focus the powerful energies at very deep levels" would occasion for the recipient "a direct transmission of the enlightened mind of the being who composed it." The composition of "a special practice for South Africa at this particular point in our history" by a living *Bodhisattva*, Tai Situpa, was in this regard highly significant, noted Nairn. So too was Tai Situpa's symbolic gesture when juxtaposing two flowers of varying color. The lama, who was considered both a *Bodhisattva* and an emanation of the future Buddha, Maitreya, said that the flowers represented "Black and White people in South Africa." Tai Situpa's ritual *mudra* thus "set energy in motion," Nairn suggested, that South African meditators could now "ground and root in the soil of this country."⁵⁵

Stronger than any bond with the land of this particular space, however, associations with lamas like Tai Situpa, who was one of the Regents of the Karmapa, formed the basis of South African Buddhist allegiance. Therefore, for some Buddhists in this country, sacred space was invested in the presence of the teacher more than in the African soil in which the jewel of *dharma* now resided. But Rob Nairn was not the only Buddhist to leave South Africa for Tibetan teachers exiled in Scotland. After attending to Akong Rinpoche and taking refuge with him in 1989, and before that with the Gelugpa teacher Geshe Damcho, in 1986, Ani Sangje Choden, "the Buddha who brings teaching down," left for Scotland in 1990 to be closer to Tai Situpa. While in Scotland she took refuge with the Regent. Initially she also took refuge in the five *pancasila* precepts, but shortly thereafter took the monastic *getsulma* vows. Those vows, she recalled, offered "protection" for any person who wore the robe of a Buddhist novice nun. As the first South African *getsulma*, she suggested, it was refuge in the robe of the novice, rather than only in the jewel of Buddha, *dharma*, and the network of *sangha*, that marked a self-consciously Buddhist identity. For many South Africans, however, the monastic institutions of Buddhism or of a peculiarly Buddhist identity continued to appear as an anomaly or as an unnecessary addition to religious practice in this place.⁵⁶

IV. Introducing Nichiren Soshu

By the time that Ani Sangje Choden arrived back in South Africa in 1992, Nieu Bethesda Samye Ling ceased to function as a center for organized Tibetan Vajrayana retreat. The life and work of early Kagyudpa Karma Rigdor meditators, however, provided a foundation and framework for the continuity of Vajrayana practice in many centers around the country. The *Tibetan Buddhist Newsletter* for February of 1992, for example, noted that the Johannesburg Kagyudpa group, begun in the late 1960s, continued with a once weekly Chenresig *puja* and meditation, at which an explanation of both the color symbolism of the *om mani padme hum mantra* and of its six-syllable sacred seed structure was given. The annual celebration of Losar also persisted. At the Samye Dzong center in Auckland Park in Johannesburg there were by now also twice-monthly full-moon meditations, to which members of a still relatively small Buddhist community brought flowers and fruit as offerings for the shrine (that was still based at the Theosophical Society). In January of that year Edith Erwin conducted a therapeutic "Taming the Tiger" retreat in which she combined the five elements central to Tibetan therapy with techniques learned from Akong Rinpoche and the psychiatrist R. D. Laing, with whom Erwin worked among schizophrenic sufferers. With the arrival in February of 1992 of a Gelugpa lama, the Venerable Geshe Damcho Yonten, along with his assistant John Allman, however, the shape of Tibetan Buddhism in South Africa began to change.

Unlike Akong Rinpoche, who was not an ordained monk, Geshe Damcho was a Gelugpa abbot, who entered the monastic university of Drepung Loseling, north of Lhasa, Tibet, at the age of six. He studied Buddhist philosophy, psychology, logic, and meditation practice at Drepung for twenty-three years before fleeing to Ladakh in 1959, where he became Abbot of Samtenling Gompa

(15)

(16)

Norba. In 1976 he began to teach in Europe and two years later, at the request of a number of students, became spiritual director of the Lam Rim Tibetan Gelugpa center in the Black Mountains of southern Wales. It was from the Lam Rim center that Geshe Damcho first came to southern Africa, with John Peacock, in December of 1988. He visited Buddhist groups in Gaborone, Botswana, where a meditation center was to be built by Sri Lankan, Burmese, and Thai Theravadin Buddhists. Geshe Damcho also visited the South African cities of Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban at the invitation of, among others, the Samye Ling (Kagyudpa) Trust, and the Theravadin center at Ixopo in the Natal Drakensberg. His training in the Gelugpa lineage, which traditionally placed more emphasis on the observation of monastic rules and the study of authoritative texts than did the more ritually expressive Kagyudpa, that drew on the authority of direct transmission, particularly of *Mahamudra*, from teacher to student, provided an opportunity for South African practitioners naturally drawn to this style of practice to experience an alternative form of Tibetan Buddhism. By the end of February of the Tibetan Water Monkey Year, 1992, the Gelugpa Lam Rim Buddhist Center of South Africa was formed, with Geshe Damcho as spiritual advisor, and with groups meeting in Johannesburg and in Durban. The contact that Geshe Damcho had with Drepung and the lamas there, argued some, would mean that South Africans would have a more constant flow of teachers present in the country at any one time.⁵⁷

The fact that relatively few people practiced Vajrayana was unimportant, noted one South African member of the Durban Gelugpa group. Buddhists were not interested in increasing the number of South African converts. Buddhism would take root if "the quality of the transmission" was maintained. In this regard, she thought the diversity of Buddhist practice, even within Tibetan Vajrayana and Tantra, was valuable. "It creates more opportunity." Akong Rinpoche concurred with this South African interpretation. He approved of the Johannesburg group dividing the focus of practice between Kagyudpa and

Gelugpa Buddhist styles, "because it suits different people." This tolerant attitude to religious pluralism was endorsed also by the spiritual head of the Gelugpa lineage when in 1991 a member of the Durban Lam Rim group met him at Gaden Monastery in India. The Dalai Lama, noted Elizabeth Gaywood,

asked a lot of questions about South Africa and the history of Buddhism here. He asked how long Buddhism had been practiced here. He asked about Sister Palmo and her involvement here and how it started the Tibetan Friendship Group. A lot of the older Tibetans I met remembered her. He said a few words to the Buddhists in South Africa. He said that Buddhist ideals of practice could be adopted by those who have no faith, simply because Buddhism is in a way a kind of tolerant humanism. Buddhism basically emphasizes mental development more than faith, he said. Buddhism was not as much a religion as it was a science of the mind.⁵⁸

Presenting and receiving back again, in an exchange now familiar, exotic, semi-precious gem-stones that she had been asked to give the Dalai Lama from some South African Tibetan Buddhists, Elizabeth Gaywood was attracted foremost neither by the jewels that, now they were blessed, were distributed among members of the community, the sick, or those who showed a genuine interest in the *dharma*. Nor was Gaywood attached to the gift of a Tibetan *thanka* that the Dalai Lama assigned for a *Gompa* that the South African Lam Rim centers hoped to acquire in Johannesburg. Instead, she felt that she "might now die in peace," because she had experienced the "oceanic" compassion of Tenzin Gyatso. Indeed, the central notion of the Mahayana *Bodhisattva* vow, she suggested, was most visibly expressed in the Tibetan tradition and its secular and religious leader, the Dalai Lama. This compassion, combined with her "previous association, a Karmic link" with the Dalai Lama, was what compelled Gaywood

to become a Buddhist. It was also what defined a Buddhist. "I would consider compassion a major facet of what it means to be a Buddhist. The world needs it. It has got to be married with wisdom. But I think, particularly in the West, they are a bit overboard with intellectual pursuits. This makes the Tibetan practice in particular very valuable."⁵⁹

After sixteen years of Buddhist practice in South Africa, and after taking the ritual of refuge with Geshe Damcho that, she felt, was an important commitment and "inward sign in which you take it upon yourself to look upon the *dharma* as your teacher," Elizabeth Gaywood sought initiation with the Dalai Lama. In a four day ceremony at Gaden, she took the Tibetan *Bodhisattva* and some Tibetan tantric vows with His Holiness. Like Ani Sangje Choden, Gaywood also thought about seeking "protection" in monastic *getsulma* vows since she felt "more vulnerable without robes." "It is alright if you are living in a semi-monastic community or even a Buddhist state, where you have the support of the people around you," she noted, "but it is more difficult if you are not. In a monastery you have a code of discipline which you adhere to strictly." In South Africa, in the absence of a temple, this was not possible.⁶⁰

Although the establishment of a monastic center in South Africa appeared remote, the possibility that Geshe Damcho would become a resident teacher in Johannesburg in order to strengthen the position of Gelugpa Vajrayana was advanced. As the influential writer Paul Williams noted, the lama planned to spend part of the year in Johannesburg because of his "particularly close Karmic link with South Africa." However, this intention, and the search for a permanent Lam Rim Gelugpa center in Johannesburg represented only one aspect of the more general growth of Tibetan Buddhist diversity in South Africa. Located at centers from the Cape Karoo to the Witwatersrand, and inspired by the visits of Tibetan Vajrayana teachers, this variety, we recall, gave rise to the monastic ordination of a South African monk and a nun, and to the initiation of a South African Vajrayana teacher. The diversity of different forms of Tibetan Buddhist

practice was, however, only one moment in an expanding plurality of the Buddhist tradition in South Africa.⁶¹

For example, a decade after its formation in South Africa in 1983, nine groups of Soka Gakkai, the lay society of the Japanese Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist movement for peace, education, and culture, were established in Cape Town, Durban, and Johannesburg. They formed part of a South African chapter of Soka Gakkai International. Founded in 1960 by President Daiseku Ikeda after his travels in the United States of America, an event that he described as "more significant than the arrival of Columbus," Soka Gakkai International, and its predecessor, the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (literally, Society for Value-creative Education) based its teachings principally on an interpretation of the *Lotus Sutra*. Called in Japanese the *Myoho-renge-kyo*, the *sutra* was also the foundation of recitation practice among South African Soka Gakkai Buddhists. However, the text was promoted in Japan from at least the thirteenth-century by the Japanese Buddhist master Nichiren Daishonin, who as his name suggested, was the one "who illuminates (*nichi*) the Lotus (*ren*)."² Noting that the present age was one that reflected the last and most degenerate age of *dharma*, a time of *mappo* in which practice was made difficult, Nichiren argued that the *Lotus Sutra* provided a template for simple practice that assured benefit, or profit (*ri*), and the satisfaction of material desires; true beauty (*bi*), or the satisfaction of spiritual desires; and goodness (*zen*), the satisfaction of sharing this benefit and beauty with others.⁶²

The historical origins of the tradition in Japan was reflected in South African interest in the tradition. For example, many Asian people, among them Japanese and Taiwanese immigrants, practiced Buddhism in an idiom associated with the teachings and rituals of Nichiren even prior to the formation of Soka Gakkai in South Africa. A number of Taiwanese members, recalled Odette Herbert, subsequently become involved in the Johannesburg group. As was the case in Japan, Herbert noted, these groups were hierarchically organized. Soka

Gakkai groups in South Africa, for example, were separated into divisions for Women and Men, and Young Women and Young Men, as was the case in Asia. Reflecting Soka Gakkai demography elsewhere in the world, of the eighty to a hundred practitioners who belonged to these divisions in South Africa in 1993, a greater number were also young women.⁶³

The focus of daily ritual likewise reflected those practices associated with Nichiren Buddhism in Japan. The morning and evening recitation (*gongyo*) of two key chapters of the *Lotus Sutra*, and the chanting of *daimoku*, or the *nam-myoho-rengye-kyo* (homage to the lotus) *mantra*, for example, were recited in Japanese, a language that most members did not understand. While many South African Buddhists owned a private altar and shrine (*butsudan*) containing copies of the *gohonzon*, the paper scroll copied by temple priests from an original text inscribed by Nichiren Daishonin that contained many Chinese and two Sanskrit characters, reflecting its author's desire for world peace, the focus of practice was not primarily, as in Tibetan Vajrayana, to meditate on or visualize the *Bodhisattva* who might awaken the participant's Buddha-nature. Nor did practice focus on the geographical nexus of Nichiren Shoshu in Japan, at Taiseki-ji, the temple where the original *gohonzon*, the *Dai Gohonzon*, was enshrined (and where a number of practitioners travelled on pilgrimage, or *tozan*). The focus of practice, argued its members, was the liberation achieved through self-reliant faith. Rather than seeking the assurance of an intermediary, a compassionate *Bodhisattva*, for example, Soka Gakkai practice was marked by self-reliance. As Nichiren Daishonin stated in an essay entitled, *On Attaining Buddhahood*, one should

never seek any of Sakyamuni's teachings or the Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas* or the universe outside of yourself. Your mastery of the Buddhist teachings will not relieve you of mortal sufferings in the least unless you perceive the nature of your own life. If you

seek enlightenment outside yourself, and discipline or good deed will be meaningless.⁶⁴

Particularly in an age of spiritual degeneracy, where practice was consequently viewed as requiring, most succinctly, commitment to daily chanting, the sacrality of place resided primarily, therefore, not in a foreign space, a center out there that interrupted the profanity of the mundane. Rather, the sacred was a place that, at different times, reconstituted and provided an alternative reference point for the body *within* the domesticity of ordinary, South African space. That sacred body-space could be achieved primarily through chanting, and focussing on the *mandala* of the *gohonzon*, the procuring of which, together with one's undertaking, during the *goyukai* ritual, to give up all other religions and to work for world peace, was, until recently, the refuge that confirmed membership of Soka Gakkai International. Viewed as "transcending time and space" and "collapsing the discourse of language and culture," the practice of *gongyo* was also viewed as the highest practical expression of one's own Buddha-nature and of one's harmony and happiness. As one Afrikaans-speaking member, "met doppers aan haar ma se kant (with Dutch Reformed Church members on her mother's side)" noted, therefore, *gongyo* was not a prayer to Buddhist gods. The Buddha was not a god. "Die Boeddha was 'n mens wat ons gewys het ons is deel van die goddelikheid (The Buddha was a person who showed us that we are part of the divine)." Soka Gakkai, and the chanting of *gongyo*, she argued, was in this sense a "soort terapie." It was a sort of therapy, however, that was articulated not only according to an internal, domestic rhythm. Soka Gakkai practice consisted of impulses that suggested an external, ostensibly Japanese temporality.⁶⁵

Specific *gongyo* were held in South Africa to commemorate, for example, the ritual occasion of the inscription of the *Dai Gohonzon*. Events in the life of Nichiren Daichonin and of the founder of Soka Kyoiku Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, were also celebrated. On the first Sunday of the month, at ten-thirty

in the morning, world-wide *gongyo* were synchronized to secure world peace. Beginning in 1992, affirming a sense of the shared historical legacy of colonial domination, chapters of Soka Gakkai in South Africa and Northern Ireland also worked together to initiate a specific *gongyo* that chanted for the implementation of free and fair elections in both republics. This cooperation was a consequence, suggested Odette Herbert, of an earlier meeting between African National Congress and South African President Nelson Mandela and Soka Gakkai President Daiseku Ikeda. In this sense, the "transcendence" of a limiting place was mediated by appeals to an essentially Japanese ritual activity and an identity initiated by the repetition of Japanese sacred time.⁶⁶

In contrast to a general appreciation of Buddhist diversity in the region, many Buddhists in South Africa asserted that Soka Gakkai was intolerant of the growth of Buddhist variety. It was described as "militaristic" in its anti-ecumenism and attempts to *shakubuku*, or proselytize others to the exclusivity of Soka Gakkai practice. Accordingly, the wider South African Buddhist community has little contact with Nichiren Buddhism. In a recent review of the history of Buddhism in South Africa, for example, Louis H. van Loon omitted the Nichiren Soshu "sect" of Buddhism from his survey "because it has only glancing connection with the Buddha's teachings and the orthodox practice of them." Although there were one hundred members of the "sect" in South Africa in 1994, Soka Gakkai Buddhists, asserted Van Loon, "have no connection with the other Buddhist groups whatsoever." Historian of religion Charles S. Prebish suggested, however, that of all the Buddhist traditions to travel outside of Asia, Soka Gakkai translated its practice into an indigenous medium more successfully than most.⁶⁷

While daily practice might involve, ideally, an evening and morning *gongyo*, including the chanting or *daimoku* of the *nam-myoho-rengye-kyo* mantra and the recitation of the *gosho*, or writings of Nichiren Daishonin, the ritual activity of prayer for deceased ancestors; the use of ritual objects, including

beads and bells; and the generally simple philosophical basis of its teachings, focussed on the charisma of Nichiren Daichonin, suggested the group leader of the Cape Town Soka Gakkai district, were perhaps a few of the reasons why this particular form of Buddhism resulted in the participation of more Africans than any other Buddhist tradition. Therefore, in spite of the fact, one Johannesburg member wryly noted, that a "mens moet seker vreeslik Karma he om in Suid-Afrika Swart gebore to word (a person must have very bad Karma to be born Black in South Africa)," forms of practice present in Soka Gakkai ritual in South Africa attracted a number of African Buddhist converts.⁶⁸

Employing Japanese ritual resources and the myths and symbols of what is an essentially Japanese-oriented account of the life and teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, Soka Gakkai is consequently, increasingly expressed, as it is elsewhere in Africa, where, for example, more than fifty thousand converts have been enumerated in Ghana, in an indigenous South African idiom. It is an idiom, in the contextualisation of practice and the expansion of *dharma* in Africa, noted Alex Berzin, that could be encouraged. In that regard, the traditions of Tibetan Tantra, Berzin suggested further, could provide for a particular resonance among African people "because of their mutual love of ritual." The value of translating Buddhism in its Tibetan and Japanese idiom into a South African style of African Buddhist practice, however, has received some criticism.⁶⁹

Although not widespread, a local chapter of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, for example, has begun to explore teaching and meditation in accord with practices consistent not with an Oriental Tibetan or Japanese orientation, but with a more European emphasis. That emphasis draws largely on the style of British Buddhist practice first formulated in 1967 by Dennis Lingwood, the Venerable Maha Sthavira Sangharakshita. Styled in some respects on the egalitarianism of Ambedkar's *Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha* in Maharashtra, that it continues to support, the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order have generally been perceived to be individualistic (as opposed to nationalistic) in

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character and opposed to the "exoticism" of attempts to translate Buddhism into the Occident in a persistent Asian cultural idiom. In contrast to Tibetan Vajrayana, and also to Nichiren Shoshu or Soka Gakkai in South Africa, therefore, the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order have tried to avoid rituals that might reflect Asian space and time that, argued Sangharakshita, were merely forms of "pseudo-orientalism." Although the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order all take Sanskrit refuge names, they have sought a more quotidian expression of the tradition in the *habitas* of local, rather than Asian-based religious practice. Grounded in a distaste for the authoritarianism, institutionalism, and formalism of Catholic forms of Christianity, this form of Buddhism has been called "Protestant Buddhist" or "Neo-Buddhism."⁷⁰

In response to such criticisms and in view of an abiding consideration in delineating a perceived orthodoxy from the contextualisation of rampant praxis, the South African-born Friends of the Western Buddhist Order Liaison Officer, Michael Chaskalson, ordained *Dharmachari Kulananda* in 1977, noted that the charge of anti-ritualism was not altogether justified. Although members were considered Buddhist even if all they knew was "something of the basics of Buddhist doctrine and practice and of traditional Buddhist disciplines such as meditation, devotion and ethical conduct," taking Buddhist vows was an important facet of the Order's ritual. Christa Kunert, for example, who worked with Sangharakshita for some time in Norwich after "developing doubts about Catholicism," and who now leads the Johannesburg chapter, took the ritual *mitra* vow, signifying her desire to maintain close links with the teachings and practice (rather than the lineage) of the Order. She has also applied to become a *dharmachari* (follower of the *dharma*), albeit of the non-monastic *sangha* in South Africa. The emphasis on an idiomatic translation of Buddhism outside of what was perceived of as alien, Asian exoticism, however, was perhaps suggested in Kunert's intent to "expand activities like teaching and meditation to hospitals and companies."⁷¹

The theoretical issues raised by Philip A. Mellor, among others, with regard to "Protestant" or Buddhist modernism are nonetheless intriguing. As Unitarians ameliorated Buddhist *dharma* within the confines of Victorian consent, the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order in South Africa, for example, have translated Buddhist practice into a European style commensurate with a "Protestant" dissent against "Catholic" ritual and "Oriental" exoticism. By contrast, Tibetan forms of Vajrayana and Japanese Nichiren, that appear generally to have a far richer ritual content and to have replicated Asian space or time, were accounted for in this respect by their apparent appeal to continuities with Catholic practice. The number of Catholics present in both Kagyudpa and Gelugpa lineages in South Africa seems to endorse this fact. Indeed, the ritual content of Tibetan Tantra is often perceived of as necessary to negotiate an identity that is still seen as exotic. As C. Ramble observed, Asian rituals paradoxically rendered Tibetan Buddhism more compatible with non-Asian, Catholic practice. Nonetheless, recent interest in the more intellectualist approach of Tibetan Gelugpa practice continues to be reminiscent of attempts to translate foreign ritual into the more familiar concerns of academically suspicious inquiry.⁷²

V. Engaged Ecumenism

While reasons for the appeal of one particular lineage or Buddhist tradition over another, and reasons for the dissatisfaction with more conventional forms of religious practice in southern Africa are of interest, their "solutions" are innumerable. More important than the theoretical issues raised by why Catholics, or Protestants, or Jews began to draw on the resources of Buddhist *dharma*, or why African people recently became attracted to the dynamism of Soka Gakkai rather than to the ritualism of Tibetan Kagyudpa, for example, are questions that

evolve out of the contradictions of this appeal. The fact that many practitioners argued that they did not consider themselves Buddhist, but took refuge frequently, lived by the precepts prescribed by Buddhist ethics, and no longer felt comfortable in the precinct of the church or synagogue calls into question the entire artifice of "Buddhist" identity. Indeed, as I suggested, and will explore more fully in Chapter Six, outside of an Orientalist imagination, or a philological invention, the notion of any substantial "Buddhist" identity might be viewed as a delusory caprice.

I have also focussed, however, on how the body acted as mediator in Buddhist orientations: how the architecture of space and time and the lexicon of body language, rather than text, shaped and reconstituted that "Buddhist" identity. The ways in which these ritual negotiations and symbolisms of geographical space and historical temporality, including the rites of synchronicity or repetition, confirmed an alternate Buddhist distinctiveness was made clear, for example, when domestic, South African practice was remodelled to conform to an Asian idiom. As Stanley J. Tambiah, Pierre Bourdieu, and Hilda Kuper, following Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, pointed out, however, the ordering of time and space is not only a restatement of a cosmographic ideal. It is an expression of the cultural reconstruction of social and individual order: Ritual classifications of time and space are thus perpetually implicated in strategies for reclassifying Others and constructing the Self.⁷³

Likewise, I suggested that, as the text was an important symbol of the presence of Buddhism in South Africa - from its Siamese appearance in the Cape in the seventeenth century; through its sacrality for Tibetan Buddhists who avoided placing *sutras* on the floor; to its reverence, in the form of the *Dai Gohonzon*, in Soka Gakkai ritual - so too was the articulation of the word a sacred symbol of the reconstituted Self. Attention to the vocalization of *mantra* and to the syllables of *sutra* was not only a technique for negotiating what might appear as an alien Other, therefore, but an articulation and intonation, either in

Sanskrit, Tibetan, or Japanese, that reorganized semantic space so as to give the practitioner an alternative possibility of both knowing and expressing a new world. It was a technique that redefined and reclassified the world.⁷⁴

Throughout the play of space and time and of text and intonation, however, I have also tried to show how identity emerged in concerns for reconfiguring or conforming an architecture of the body to an Asian time and place, or an Oriental lexicon of semantic space. Practice in southern Africa began to draw on local symbolic resources to articulate forms of *dharma* expressed, however, not only in embodied ritual but in the life of the body politic. An emerging interest in responding to the issues of what was perceived to be a more profound arena of persistent *dukkha* in South Africa started to mediate the way in which a South African *sutra* was inscribed, therefore. In contrast to earlier Buddhists, people like Karma Chophel, for example, who were convinced of the necessity that "Buddhists, after all, should be good Nationalists in every country where they are found," there appeared in the late 1980s an increasing concern to engage the world rather than to withdraw from it. Sheila Fugard, for example, noted how "in an age of profound suffering," what defined Buddhism was its ability to "deal with so much of the trauma that we all have in modern life." "It is having to struggle hard to define compassion [and] as a Western Buddhist, having to deal with social issues in South Africa," that most articulately classified Buddhists in the region. "We cannot just intellectualize Buddhism," asserted Fugard. Similarly, Elizabeth Gaywood suggested that, in the context of there being few "bonds between Buddhists in this country," the demonstration of benevolence and compassion, of *metta* and *karuna*, became the essence of *dharma*. Both Soka Gakkai South Africa and the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, as I indicated, were similarly engaged, as the Karuna Trust of the latter suggests, in contextualising the compassion of Buddhist practice in South African politics.⁷⁵

More recently, however, with attempts by the South African Kagyudpa *bhikkhu*, Karma Samten Phuntsok, to begin a South African chapter of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, founded internationally in 1978 in order to "bring a Buddhist perspective to the peace movement," these impulses gained some interdenominational perspective in response to "a culture pervaded by political, social and ecological ignorance." Writing in 1987 to Ruth Klein, a board member of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, Karma Samten Phuntsok suggested that a South African Buddhist response to the *Kairos Document* was needed in order to extend ecumenism to other religious traditions. For example, Karma Samten Phuntsok thought that there would "be room for dialogue between South African Christian Liberation Theology and the precepts of the Tiep Hein Order of the Vietnamese Zen monk Thich Nhat Hanh."⁷⁶

Two years earlier, in 1985, another South African, Gavin Harrison, met the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh at the Insight Meditation Center in Barre, Massachusetts, where Harrison was living according to the monastic precepts of a Burmese Theravadin monk. Having left South Africa in 1975 to escape the "nightmare of injustice," Harrison noted that "engaged Buddhist Action in South Africa" needed to become "a powerful force in an environment governed by fear, anger and ignorance." Thich Nhat Hanh stressed to him the importance of "bridge-building in South Africa." As Harrison wrote to Karma Samten Phuntsok, although the *dharma* appeared "pretty much snow-White in South Africa," the possibility existed for an organization like the Buddhist Peace Fellowship to "transcend the vacuous mountaintops and deserts of *dharma* in South Africa and bring it into the Sowetos, Crossroads and resettlement areas of the country."⁷⁷

While the *dharma* resided in the Drakensberg, in the Hottentots Holland and Copper Colored mountains, and in the deserts of the Karoo retreat at Nieu Bethesda Samye Ling, therefore, it was time, as the Tibetan *bhikkhu* Gelong Jhampa Thabkay wrote in a review for *Tricycle*, entitled "No Man's Land: A

Letter from South Africa," that Buddhism provided "insight into the transparent, dependently emergent nature of things" in order to "dispel perceptions of people as endowed with inherent traits or characteristics." "The Buddhist critique of unchanging essences," of *pratityasamutpada*, urged Gelong Jhampa Thabkay, "would help in freeing the minds of Whites and Blacks alike from the lingering web of suspicion and reification that underpinned the psychology of apartheid."⁷⁸

In the same journal, and in a subsequent interview with the American anthropologist, linguist, poet, and West-Coast, Beat-Zen Buddhist, Gary Snyder, another South African alluded to the necessity, "looking out at the familiar, changing landscape of Devils' Peak," near Cape Town, in the context of the *Buddhadharma* in South Africa, of speaking out against the injustices experienced by women and inflicted upon the environment. Comprising, among others, Jack Cope, Katrin Auf der Heyde, and Sue Cooper, the Cape Town Ecology Group and Eco-Program, of which academic and postmodern literary theorist Julia Martin was a member, began to employ Buddhist philosophical principles, including the notion of *pratityasamutpada*, in order to provide a more appropriate theoretical base for ecological activism. The particular focus of that activism was directed at opposition to the continued threat of nuclear waste from the Cape peninsula's Koeberg Power Station. Since in Buddhism, however, noted Martin, "theory and religious or spiritual practice always inform one another," not only did Buddhist concern and *karuna* seem peculiarly appropriate for this threatened landscape. The coefficient of Buddhist care implied that, "because we in South Africa are a very politicized society," the context of South African struggle "necessarily informed Buddhism here." That theory and practice were viewed as codetermined, and that Buddhism, especially, was deemed able to provide the ability successfully to view nature and reality as mutually arising, and the world and its inhabitants as non-dualist, prompted Gary Snyder to write to the group suggesting "that all the varieties of eco-philosophy and

postmodernism need quit theorizing about the self." They needed to:

start doing *zazen* - leading directly to Dogen's "We study the Self to forget the self. When we forget the Self we encounter all phenomena." With No-Self, the ten thousand things are allowed to instruct us and confirm us together with them. You have to open up or empty out to let something in and to learn. "Emptiness" is something I have learnt not to talk much about.⁷⁹

Passing over some of the more fundamental canonical contradictions in contemporary Buddhist contributions to ecological activism - that include, as Ian Harris pointed out, the fact that Siddhartha Gautama did not take the injunction of Hindu *ahimsa* or non-violence to imply strict eco-sensitivity or even vegetarianism - Snyder's comments indicated a concern, shared by Martin and others, to locate Buddhist *dharma* in a persistent critique of, among other distinctions, race and gender associations in South Africa. Collapsing the duality of Self and Other, and seeing all sentient beings, whether plant or animal, as moments in non-discriminating dialogue, their discussions employed Zen meditative techniques in order to displace any notion of a distinctive, grasping "Self." Rather than locate the meaning of Buddhism in myths, symbols and traditions from Tibetan or Japanese cosmology, or search for a new identity in the arena of Asian intonation or visualization techniques, or Asian architectural idioms, these South African Buddhists sought to construct an alternate identity that drew on Zen techniques to displace the dichotomy between East and West, and black and white.⁸⁰

One facet of the recent emergence of Zen practice in South Africa, therefore, is an attempt to translate non-dualism and Zen-mind into the contours of this particular country. Attempts at that denotation are suggested by the practice of Korean Chogye Buddhists in South Africa. Based in Somerset West, at the Dharma Center of the Kwan Um School of Zen, and at centers in

Grahamstown, Johannesburg, and the Karoo town of Colesberg, they fall under the jurisdiction of Zen Master Seung Sahn (Dae Soen Sa Nim), the first Korean Master to teach outside of Asia. This is true also of the Soto Zen tradition. The tradition, which is associated with the Zen Association Internationale in Paris, and in particular, with the teachings of the late Taisen Deshimaru Roshi, owns a retreat centre in the North-eastern Transvaal, and a *dojo*, the Dojo Marisan Nariji, in Johannesburg.⁸¹

Although Katrin Auf der Heyde wrote that many Buddhists like her were unable "to be clear on what our role in a new South Africa will be," therefore, the South African-born Zen Buddhist teacher Antony Osler noted that "the teachings of Buddhism" were "a fine lens through which to examine" the "pain of poverty and prejudice" of our times. Buddhism also provided the means for attaining an "insightful compassion" and feeling of "interconnectedness" that, he wrote, could collapse duality and "clear the mind for appropriate action." By drawing on the resources of Buddhist teaching and practice, encapsulated in the four noble truths, South Africans could erase the desire to cling to their racial prejudices, "holding on and not accepting others as they are."⁸²

Moving from an invention of Buddhism on Adamsberg to its intern, in Tibetan jewels of *dharma* in the Copper Colored Mountain; from the tenuous inscription of Buddhist *suttas* beyond the Hottentots Holland Mountains to their investment in Tantric ritual in the Magaliesberg; from the chanting of Buddhists in the Karoo town of Nieu Bethesda to the beginnings of active praxis among Cape Buddhists in the Cape, I have explored a number of sites of Buddhist practice in South Africa. At about the same time as Nieu Bethesda Samye Ling was inaugurated, however, the Buddhist Retreat Center at Ixopo, the locus of Alan Paton's *Cry the Beloved Country*, was also consecrated. It marked the presence not only of Theravadin practice. It recorded perhaps the single most important event in the history of Buddhism in South Africa.

Chapter Six: Theravadin and Zen Buddhists

In the Spring of 1979 a long-standing British Buddhist journal noted the "remarkable" fact that Buddhism was steadily expanding in South Africa. A non-sectarian Buddhist retreat center in the Natal Drakensberg would shortly be inaugurated and an institute formed to offer a more comprehensive program of meditation for people who "wished to penetrate more deeply into the *dharma*." This was an indication, the editor of *Middle Way* pointed out, that an alternative, Buddhist life-style was now being adopted by some South Africans.

The widening interest in Buddhist practice, and the formation of the Buddhist Institute of South Africa that would administer the Buddhist Retreat Center at Ixopo, noted the writer, was a result, in part, of the tireless effort, the "energy which is sometimes sadly lacking in the *dharma*," of Louis van Loon. An architect, engineer, and visiting lecturer in the Department of the Science of Religion at the University of Durban-Westville, and in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town, Van Loon attempted, as president of the Vegetarian Society in Natal, to "reactivate" the Natal Indian Buddhist Society in the late 1960s. He and Molly van Loon felt that although the practice of these Ambedkar-styled Buddhists was unorthodox and highly devotional in character, Indians were "the true inheritors of Buddhism." In an address to the All India Frontier Buddha Mahasabha at the International Buddhist Conference in Delhi in September of 1978, however, Van Loon suggested that the growth of Buddhism in South Africa, culminating in the formation of the Buddhist Institute and Retreat Center, was an indication of the "successful unfolding of the Buddha Dharma for the first time in the history of this continent." It was one of the first signs

of an expanding history of Buddhism not only in South Africa, therefore, but an event that heralded the birth of Buddhism in Africa.¹

Perhaps Van Loon failed to appreciate the long history of a South African association with Buddhism and the African interest in Buddhist thought and practice that predated these events. For example, in 1927 a Buddhist monastery was built by Sri Lankan immigrants in Tanzania and an African *bhikkhu* was ordained. Locating Buddhism in the South African context, however, Van Loon reported that this alternative life-style was growing "in spite of the turmoil and agony," the "simultaneous *dukkha*" of apartheid that South Africans experienced. In this sense the inauguration of a Buddhist Retreat Center in Africa in the late 1970s was a remarkable, if not unprecedented event. The continued importance of that and other Buddhist centres in South Africa, as well as the growth in interest in the tradition was even "an indication that [Buddhism had] a contribution to make in this country's transition to a more equitable political dispensation."²

The 125-hectare Buddhist Retreat Centre in the Umkomaas Valley was not entirely an African space, however. Modelled on centuries-old Buddhist monastic settlements in Sri Lanka, the Center at Ixopo conformed more particularly to an Asian Buddhist place. In accord with Buddhist philosophical terminology, for example, the wattle farm on which the retreat was built was named Nirodha, a term chosen to signify the third of the Four Noble Truths and the place, therefore, in which the cessation of a South African nonsatisfactoriness, or *dukkha*, might be achieved. Similarly, the hill on which the center was constructed was named Nalanda, after the ancient Buddhist scholastic center founded near Patna. A deer park, albeit to be filled with African wildlife, was also envisaged to replicate the reserve of Isipatana, the sacred place in which the Buddha first set the wheel of *dharma* in motion.³

Attempts to conform African architectural space with sacred Asian places were present in other ways. The *Middle Way* reported in 1983, for example, that a Buddhist *stupa*, a memorial mound that commemorated the death of the Buddha and that contained relics of Gautama or other enlightened beings, was consecrated at Ixopo in that year. The site of the *stupa*, the first in Africa, was chosen in 1972 by Anagarika Govinda. In a ceremony that included the Van Loons and a number of Tibetan Buddhists in Natal, among them John Poynton, then president of the South African Association for Psychical Research, for which Van Loon later contributed a paper, the renowned writer and founder of the Arya Maitreya Mandala determined the precise location of the structure. The site of this locality was chosen based on Buddhist geomantic rituals reminiscent of those enacted somewhat earlier by Chinese Buddhists in South Africa. It gave the retreat, noted one reporter, "a degree of centeredness." Somehow the "stupa" reflected an increasing degree of committed spiritual practice."⁴

Two years after the *stupa* was completed, a visiting American Buddhist *bhikkhu*, the acting Abbot of a Theravadin *vihara* in Chithurst, England, extended a two-month visit to Ixopo in order to oversee the construction of a large Buddha *rupa*. This *rupa* was a five meter-high ferocious form of the Buddha that, one commentator quipped, was a representation of committed, "concrete meditation." Ajahn Anando considered the building of the *rupa* an auspicious undertaking, since it would generate great merit. The accumulation of merit was in turn mirrored by the multiplication of relics. Redolent of familiar Theosophical and Spiritualist practices in the Drakensberg, and echoing earlier events in the life of stranded Siamese Buddhists in the Hottentots Holland mountains, crystals were placed in a special phial or reliquary in the head of the *rupa*. The deposit of Buddhist relics at Ixopo was undertaken by Anando and the English Chithurst monk, Venerable Sucitto, who arrived to perform this

particular ritual in 1986, at what was then already, internationally, known as the "Hilton of meditation retreats." Illustrating again the insertion of Asian sacrality into an African landscape, this time in the form of outsized iconography and the materiality of small *sarira* relics, the Buddhist Retreat Center at Ixopo was, in fact, as one journalist wrote, an alternative Asian "artifact." However, unlike the inertia exhibited in the oriental collections of the museum, or indeed, in the interpretive paradigms inaugurated by travellers who, like Edward Stallybrass, viewed Tibetan Buddhist temples in Mongolia, for example, as if they were "museums," the center at Ixopo represented the living presence of Buddhism in South Africa.⁵

Not all meditators or visitors regarded these monumental attempts to orient the center as beneficial. One resident suggested that although "some people need these dependencies," she lived "in the wilds of Africa so that the statues and *stupas* did not mean a lot." She preferred instead "natural sounds and signs, the natural environment" since these, more than artificial, alien, or exotic Asian artifacts, including the *stupa* and *rupa*, and later, the Buddhist meditation hall, or *zendo*, represented the truth of impermanence and *dharma*. In these respects the retreat's Japanese Zen-garden, or *karesansui*, that signified a center of restraint and environmental economy, was thought to reflect perhaps more profoundly Buddhist form. A miniature display of what Mattieu Casalis called an "assymetrically entire cosmos" of "monochromatic absence," the garden advanced a rhetoric of emptiness and non-attachment that many meditators at Ixopo argued was a far greater support for meditation than any concrete *rupa*. The *karesansui* also confused the totalizing narrative of a taxonomic opposition that, I argued, appeared in the nomenclature and chronology of museum collections. As a resident teacher recalled in the tri-yearly newsletter published by the retreat, living in

close contact with the garden and with the changing patterns of nature

keeps us alive to the opportunities of understanding and penetrating the great teachings of the *dharma*. The impermanence and inter-dependence of all things is revealed [in nature] each day.⁶

The Buddhist concept of *pratityasamutpada*, or inter-dependent coorigination, therefore, was thought by some Buddhists to be as visible in the day to day awareness of what it meant to be human in an African environment, in a sacred, African place, as in the "absence" of space and time accorded by an imported Asian place. The Buddhist Retreat Center at Ixopo nonetheless measured time in accordance with Asian Buddhist chronology. The full-moon period of Wesak, that commemorated the birth, enlightenment, and death (more correctly, *parinirvana*) of the Buddha, usually in the month of May, was the most significant of these calendrical rites. At that time, coinciding with the observances of the worldwide Buddhist community, an annual weekend or five-day retreat was held to reflect on "the nature of enlightenment; on release from ignorance, cupidity and hostility; and freedom from conditioned becoming." It culminated in a candlelight procession around the Buddha *rupa*, a practice initiated by Venerable Sucitto.

Aside from Wesak, the advent of a new year also formed part of the Buddhist calendar at Ixopo. Based on the suggestions of a Zen teacher who led a number of retreats at the center, a hundred and eight bells were rung, followed by the more characteristic circumambulation of the *rupa* and the carrying of candles. Antony Osler, who was the first resident teacher, from 1980 to 1983, introduced poetry readings and the recitation of Buddhist texts in Pali or Japanese. Another South Africa teacher noted, however, that "there was nothing laid down by tradition." South African-born Karma

Sonam Lodo recalled that "we just did what seemed appropriate for our practice in this place and at this time."⁷

Rites of passage marking the transition from death to new birth were also celebrated as ritual events. Early residents at Ixopo attended cremation ceremonies undertaken by the Natal Indian Buddhist Society, for example, where prayers were recited in Pali and Tamil, although, as Karma Sonam Lodo noted, these "were also very much something which we made up." The rituals did provide, however, "the impetus to start on the spiritual path. Recognition of the vulnerability and impermanence of human existence," argued Venerable Sucitto, helped the living "contemplate in meditation how forms arise and pass away."⁸

Less conspicuous than funerals, and the chanting and offerings that were proffered for the dead at these times, were marriage rites. Traditionally, marriages were not conducted by monks in Buddhist societies. However, at Ixopo a number of marriages were consecrated by Buddhist monks and teachers according to rituals that were outlined by the Theravadin *sangha* at Chithurst. These matrimonial rituals included the tying of a cord running from a raised Buddha *rupa*, over an altar on which were placed flowers and candles, and around the bridal party - over the laps of the bride and groom and their parents - to signify the link between the three jewels, or *tiratana*, of Buddha, *dharma*, and *sangha*.⁹

In some sense all time was sacred time at Nirodha. Residents and retreatants were expected to keep the five lay precepts refraining from taking life, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, and intoxicants. The semi-monastic environment demanded, for example, that participants be separated according to gender. In contrast to Theravadin practice elsewhere in Asia, lay participants were also instructed to wear the saffron robe during meditation times in the *zendo* or whilst walking in meditative silence. The daily routine similarly reflected this innovative monastic manipulation of

space and time. Normally, for example, the day began with an hour-long meditation at dawn, followed by Tai Chi or Yoga until breakfast. Meals were vegetarian, and eaten in noble-silence.¹⁰ *peace & med*

Clearly, this was no romantic, "dreamy sect," as one newspaper columnist suggested. It was not "a self-improvement cult," either, but "a vital and relevant, alternative life-style." Although the retreat center was, according to its charter, a "non-theistic, non-sectarian, non-profit, non-taxable religious organization," that demanded no "affiliation, allegiance, or declaration of faith," it was nonetheless an alternative *Buddhist* center inasmuch as it demanded a regime of Buddhist discipline. Discipline also occurred in an arena structured in accord with Buddhist space and time. The sentiment that this structure was necessary was intimated by the Founding Abbot of the Chithurst monastery, the American *bhikkhu*, Ajahn Sumedho. Sumedho, who is perhaps the leading figure of Theravada Buddhism in England, argued that whereas in Asia one could be a Buddhist whether one was devout or not, in Africa, for example, being a Buddhist required refuge in a more rigorous practice made real in Asian ritual.¹¹ *§ 250*

The opinion that Asian ritual was an erroneous deviation, rather than merely a passing "dependency," as Ajahn Sumedho asserted, was advanced by a number of South African Buddhists. Not least among these Buddhists were the members of the Western Buddhist Order. Venerable Maha Sthavira Sangharakshita, I recalled, regarded monastic communities, including the traditional forest monastery at Chithurst, as "pseudo-oriental hothouses" - although, ironically, that teacher is famous for his single-sex centres and opposition to the "nuclear family." Similarly, a South African student of Sangharakshita thought that although some rituals at Ixopo were "not necessarily Buddhist as such," because Buddhism was "philosophically very far from our modes of thought and world outlook," and since there was as yet no "real teacher who has trodden the path to the end among us," it was

"wrong for laymen to don the yellow robe" at the center. As an "Asian import," his published assessment proceeded, Buddhism "should be approached with caution."¹²

Conversant with such criticisms, teachers at the Ixopo retreat center often negotiated what appeared to be the strangeness of Buddhism not by replicating, for example, the "exhibitionism of Tibetan ritual," that, some practitioners argued, enhanced the peculiarity of Asia. Instead, they inscribed the meaning of Buddhism in South Africa by appealing to beliefs that ameliorated the apparent exoticism of Buddhism and promoted the "original, and more scientific, Theravadin" form of the tradition. Consistent with nineteenth-century textual imaginings, therefore, Molly van Loon, among others, assumed that the Theravadin tradition "most closely reflected the teachings of Buddha Gautama." In discourse that recalled earlier rational and Unitarian considerations, Louis Van Loon consequently stressed that although the Buddhist Retreat Center would be essentially non-sectarian and ecumenical, it would conform to a style of "tolerant," "practical" practice "founded on sound Theravadin principles." Those "scientific" principles, asserted Louis van Loon, "suited the Westerner at a time when the Judaic-Christian tradition became unsatisfactory;" at a time when Christianity failed adequately to solve the "clashes between science and religion." In these terms, the Buddhist Institute and the Retreat Center would conform to an interpretation of Buddhism that was "not superstitious, did not adhere to magic, or the worship of idols," and was "scientific." That "intellectual aspect would not always be grasped by the common [person]," Van Loon suggested, but it was an aspect that would be necessary if Buddhism was to be made real in the absence of excessive ritual. Rejecting spurious "superstition," Westerners required a Buddhism, often absent in Asia, he argued, that erased strangeness by adopting familiar "scientific" forms of intellectual interpretation.¹³

Drawing out moments when people cautiously approached Buddhism in this idiom at Ixopo, and at Theravadin Buddhist centers in Cape Town and Pretoria, I look at some of the times and places in which this tradition contributed to the history of religious pluralism and the development of Buddhist diversity in South Africa. Rather than questioning why contradictions between Buddhist beliefs and the particular, contextual innovations that represented Theravadin observances in South Africa emerged, however, I ask how Buddhism might be defined in the light of this conditioned existence. If, as Louis van Loon stressed, Buddhism, "unlike most religions, is not a system of belief," and that to "relinquish one's religious outlook is the very antithesis of Buddhist" teaching, I query what ontological independence "Buddhism" could advance beyond any other ontology, especially for those practitioners who resisted the appeal of Buddhist ritual in South Africa.¹⁴

Consequently, in the second half of this chapter I recount the emergence of Zen Buddhist schools in South Africa that began to explore what it meant to be Buddhist in terms neither of conversion, belief, or ritual, but in accordance with a view of the essential and epistemological formlessness, or emptiness (*sunyata*) of any lasting Buddhist identity. As Sheila Fugard observed, although the number of Buddhist practitioners in South Africa increased marginally from 1911 to 1970, Buddhism itself began to move "from the form to the formless." Accordingly, I expose the empty structure of what Molly van Loon insisted was a necessary requirement of this tradition: That Buddhism in South Africa be defined not by what some scholars identified as its necessary "intellectual indigenization" within a (10) "South African social and intellectual past and present," but in terms of a soteriology that moves away, "even as the Buddha did, from groups and societies, and treads the way alone. Because the teacher is within, the others are all props." Before pointing to the possibility, in the Epilogue, of

deconstructing these narratives by employing a method consistent with analytical resources reminiscent of a Buddhist hermeneutic, however, I explore a fundamental moment in an expanding Theravadin history in South Africa. I account for some of the twelve thousand visitors who attended the "Buddha in the Bush" - the "Buddha of the Berg" - in Alan Paton's "Beloved Country."¹⁵

I. A Buddhist Hilton in the Drakensberg

Acquired in 1969, following the discovery of a location that confirmed an earlier vision, the Buddhist Retreat Center at Ixopo was opened in 1979 under the auspices of the Buddhist Institute of South Africa. Formally constituted in April of 1980, the Institute comprised some thirty members who supported a non-sectarian policy, "avoiding cults, and pseudo-sects," and embracing "all true forms of the Buddhist religion to promote the growth of Buddhism in South Africa." The Institute established links with Theravadin centers in Britain and the United States of America, including the Chithurst Forest Monastery and the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, which gave *dana* donations in support of the Retreat, and which was codirected by the now renowned Vipassana meditation teachers Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein.¹⁶

Although the Center at Ixopo was founded on the "true Buddhism" of the Theravadin tradition, South African residents or teachers at the Center were not necessarily Theravadin Buddhists. Antony Osler, for example, first become interested in Tibetan Kagyudpa Vajrayana. He visited the Samye Ling Temple in Scotland, where Rob Nairn later trained, and practiced under the direction of the Tibetan, Milarepa-like figure, Kalu Rinpoche, whom he met after leaving the Samye Ling center in Nieu Bethesda, where he was

resident teacher. Osler later lived in accordance with the monastic vows of a Zen monk at Mount Baldy Zen Center in the San Bernardino Mountains with the "elder statesman" of American, Rinzai Zen, Joshu Sasaki-roshi. As one retreatant recalled, "The *rohatsu* [Wesak] *sesshin* at Mount Baldy - where people rise at three, go to sleep at eleven, face roshi in *sanzen* [private listening] five times a day, and weave in and out of snow-covered boulders for *kinhin* [walking meditation]," was "notorious for hard practice."¹⁷

Another early resident who took refuge in the Tibetan Kagyudpa lineage and was given the name Karma Rigdor Wangmo was familiar with equally diverse experiences of Buddhist pluralism in southern Africa. She joined a Buddhist group in Umtali, Zimbabwe, after attending a symposium of world religions at Swami Nisrayasananda's ashram in Bulawayo. The group, that was formed in the 1950s, comprised a number of Spiritualists and Theosophists interested in Buddhist philosophy. Later she met Rob Nairn in Bulawayo, and together they attempted to advance Buddhist practice. In the late 1970s, for example, they toured Zimbabwe, performing Tibetan cleansing rituals, including the Chenresig and Manjusri *pujas*. Although Karma Rigdor Wangmo spent some time at Nieu Bethesda Samye Ling, her introductory and continuing practice was Theravadin. She travelled frequently to England to do intensive practice with the master of Thai Vipassana meditation and *Abhidharma* (Buddhist psychology), Dhiravamsa. That teacher arrived in London in 1966 to act as interpreter for his mentor, the famous Chao Khun Rajasiddhimuni. Moving from the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, Dhiravamsa later served as head of the Buddhapadipa temple in Hindhead, before disrobing in 1971.¹⁸

Likewise, prior to his involvement in Theravadin practice at Ixopo, Karma Sonam Lodo, a long-standing resident and teacher at Ixopo, who was first attracted to Buddhist philosophy at the Vegetarian Society because of its compatibility with an ethos of compassion, attended Tibetan Kagyudpa

meetings organized by Karma Kunchok Sherub in Durban. Travelling to Darjeeling in India in 1975, he received the Chenresig initiation from Kalu Rinpoche - "an initiation which remains the foundation-stone of my practice," he noted. The initiation was a "ritualistic event which was the major inspiration in my life." Kalu Rinpoche, recounted the South African computer-programmer, "exuded an extraordinary sense of peace, calmness, and power."¹⁹

An interest in different forms of Buddhism among residents and visitors continued at Ixopo, although, as one resident observed, "there are many [South African Buddhists] who have no idea that there is a difference between Theravada and Mahayana, never mind between Theravada and Vajrajana Buddhism." This diversity was also evident in the different styles and schools of visiting teachers. Notwithstanding that most teachers were Theravadin, among them the Sri Lankan *bhikkhu* Venerable Piyadassi Mahathera and Venerable Homagamma Kondanna (1981-1982); the American and English Theravadin monks Ajahn Anando (1984-1985) and Ajahn Sucitto (1985-1986); a German, Jewish *bhikkhuni*, Ayya Khema (1982 and 1984); and Vipassana meditation teachers Joseph Goldstein and Godwin Samararatne (1983 and 1984, 1985, 1987, 1988, and 1990), many teachers came from different Buddhist traditions. Dr. Gottman, who visited South Africa in 1989, for example, was a disciple of the Arya Maitreya Mandala teacher Lama Anagarika Govinda, who helped to initiate the retreat in 1969. Many Tibetan teachers from Kagyudpa and Gelugpa lineages also visited the center. These included Lama Namgyal Rinpoche (1984); and Geshe Damcho Yonten; John Peacock; Alex Berzin; and John Allman (1988 and 1991-1992). Teachers from the Zen tradition were also regular visitors at Ixopo, among them Steve Allen, who began his training at Shunryu Suzuki-roshi's San Francisco Zen Center, Korean Kwun Um school of Son (Zen) monks,

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among them Master Seung Sahn (1989), Mu Deung Su Nim (1991) and Su Bong Soen Sa (1993 and 1994), also taught at the center.²⁰

By bringing some of the most eminent teachers of Buddhism in the West to South Africa, the primary concern of the Buddhist Institute was neither to "convert South Africans to Buddhism" nor to convert South African Buddhists to the Theravada tradition. Piyadassi, a Sri Lankan Satipatthana-meditation teacher who became head teacher of the Buddhist Vihara Society in Washington, stressed this point. "Buddhism," he noted in an interview in South Africa before travelling to Lesotho and Zambia, where there were about three hundred Sri Lankan Buddhist immigrants, was "essentially a religion of free thought. It shows the way and it is up to you whether you want to follow it or not. There is no compulsion or coercion." As Piyadassi insisted, "I am not out to convert anybody, just to give the Buddhist message. Everybody can follow it." In fact, since Buddhism was neither dependent on ritual or belief, but on persistent practice, it was "a do-it-yourself" religion.²¹

Similarly, Ilse Ledermann, who in 1978 founded the Wat Buddha Dhamma forest monastery near Sydney, Australia, and took monastic precepts and the refuge name Ayya Khema the following year in order to establish the International Buddhist Women's Center near Colombo, Sri Lanka, taught that "anyone, of any religious inclination, could benefit from Buddhism." It was a "spiritual path that was pragmatic and down to earth." Although refuge or "shelter" in the Triple Gem of *Tiratana* denoted excellent Karma, Ayya Khema asserted, it was only an outward representation of anchoring life to the "transcendent, absolute reality, the connection to a consciousness that overrides everything else."²²

The promise that being "Buddhist" might conceivably have little to do with religious affiliation or doctrinal belief was also illustrated on the occasions that Catholic, monastic believers participated in Theravadin

Buddhist retreats at the Center. Karma Rigdor Wangmo organized two such retreats, in 1984 and again in 1989, that were attended by about forty nuns from the Marianhill Convent in Ixopo. These retreats were conducted by the Catholic Oblate and Soto Zen practitioner, Sepp Anthofer. Anthofer trained for a year in the Japanese *zazen* of Reirin Yamada-roshi, who was Soto bishop of America and *dharma* successor of Sanbo Kyodan (Fellowship of the Three Treasures) founders, Harada and Hakuun Yasutani-roshi. His teachings convinced a few of the nuns, including Sister Margaret, that though they "were still Catholic," Buddhist meditative practices, including *zazen*, were not only compatible with Christianity, but "had totally transformed us."²³

As I suggested, however, the conviction that Buddhist contemplative traditions were not necessarily incongruent with Christian spirituality was not shared by all Christian commentators. When Anthofer later built a retreat center to provide a space for people who wanted to learn about and practice *zazen* near the Hartbeespoort Dam, in Ifafi, outside Pretoria, resistance was as vociferous as when Taiwanese Buddhists began to build a temple in Bronkhorstspuit. The Reverend Vivian Harris, Executive Secretary of the Methodist Church, remarked that it would be "better to be the right way up than standing on your head when contemplating the mystery of God." His aversion to perceived Buddhist practice, conceived of as an inversion of Christian communion, implied that "orthodox Christianity would never consider incorporating Eastern religious" ideas. Ron Steele of the Rhema Church argued that employing Buddhist practices would lead both to the inversion of a Christian body and a dangerous reversal of Christian belief: "Zen and Yoga are in conflict with the teachings of Jesus Christ. The Bible explicitly commands us not to open our minds to other spiritual things. We've dealt with people who meddled in Eastern religions and they have been through some strange experiences."²⁴

As an exotic, strange inversion, the converse of Christian order, Buddhism, argued the moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, Johan Heyns, could not be reconciled with even the most catholic interpretation of biblical truth. "There is a very definite distance between what they teach and what we do," he proposed. However, the distinctions that professor Heyns pointed out were distinctions that Catholic monks and nuns, among them Oblate Sepp Anthofer, failed to perceive. "Zen is not Buddhist. It is a way of life that is about getting in touch with the inner center," Anthofer argued. Buddhism was, in fact, an expression of what it meant to be fully human. As Helena Christina Steyn observed in her thesis on philosophical continuities in the thought of the Catholic theologian Thomas Merton and "Theravada-Boeddhisme," Christians and Buddhists suprisingly, obviously shared a *human* condition that could, she hoped, open the way for dialogue amidst religious diversity.²⁵

Although most teachers who conducted weekend or week-long retreats at Ixopo advanced this ecumenical, anti-ritualist ethos, where belief or commitment to specifically Buddhist teachings was considered non-essential, attempts to translate the tradition into an appropriately Western "secular" or "scientific" idiom were occasionally frustrated by appeals to peculiarly Theravadin practice. For example, one of the first Sri Lankan *bhikkhu* to teach at Ixopo, the Venerable Homagama Kondanna, demanded a regime of strict attendance to the Theravadin *Vinaya* and *Patimokkha* code for the duration of his three-month "rains retreat" at Ixopo, that fell between the full moons of August and November. A *Sunday Tribune* reporter described his audience with the *bhikkhu*, who possessed, in accordance with the monastic precepts and rule, only three robes; an umbrella; a razor; sewing-kit; pullover; two pairs of socks and a pair of sandals, all packed in a begging-bowl. The bemused reporter noted that he was instructed to remove his shoes upon entering the monk's quarters. This standard Thai custom,

normally not associated with Sinhalese monks and, therefore, possibly imposed upon Kondanna by his Chithurst-trained and South African born helper, demanded that the reporter also refrain from pointing his feet at the monk, an act that was considered disrespectful. The reporter was instructed by the helper not to begin eating before the "globe-trotting Buddhist monk" finished using his "Chinese-type spoon," and was told to be silent unless the monk invited conversation.²⁶

The exoticism of etiquette that the monk appeared to demand also offended or baffled many participants. Women retreatants, in particular, who "were not allowed to come within even an arms length of the man," argued that, in attempting to enforce an alien Asian regime, the *bhikkhu* observed rules that were detrimental to the advancement of what being Buddhist in Africa implied, even if this convention of Thai practice was deemed original. It did, however, result in the ordination of some South African men. An elderly ex-airforce air-gunner and Johannesburg draughtsman took refuge with Kondanna and in eight of the ten basic monastic precepts, that included celibacy and a new Pali name, Kolitha, to become the first of two ordained Theravadin *anagarikas* in South Africa. Anagarika Kolitha's duties included overseeing the day-to-day requirements of subsequent teacher-monks at Ixopo.²⁷

Retreats at Ixopo subsequently inscribed Buddhist practice within a more ecumenical and secular idiom, however, offering courses that were not necessarily Buddhist let alone Theravadin. These courses included Asian cultural activities, like Ikebana, Sumi-e painting, archery, pottery, the art of tea, Tai Chi, Yoga, and Chinese medicine. Attention to the natural environment was also encouraged, with bird-watching weekends conducted by ornithologist Gordon Maclean. The specific considerations of morality and family relationships in South Africa were discussed and retreats for young people and families, men and women, were frequent. This interest in

family-values among Buddhists in South Africa was advanced in the publication of one retreatants' writings on Buddhist ethics and attitudes to human sexuality, and in plans to form a chapter of Sakyadhita, a Lay Buddhist Womens' Organization, that produced the *Newsletter on International Women's Activities* to which the Theravadin Buddhist group in Cape Town subscribed. Gavin Harrison, an accountant who became a resident at Ixopo for a year in 1981, returned to the center after taking monastic precepts at the Theravadin Burmese Buddhist Taung Pulu World Peace Monastery near San Francisco, after teaching at the Insight Meditation Center at Barre, to conduct a retreat on how to live with AIDS. An account of his struggle with the virus, which he called "Sipho," was distributed by the Buddhist publisher Shambhala under the title, *In the Lap of the Buddha*.²⁸

Stimulated for the most part by an attraction to the scientific nature of Buddhist philosophy, interest in healing techniques and therapies was eventually superseded by an emphasis on the clinical and psychological benefits that could be attained by Buddhist meditation practice. Rather than a cultural inquiry into Asian arts or a reliance on Theravadin rituals, therefore, retreats at Ixopo increasingly focussed on how meditation, informed by Buddhist *Abhidharma* psychology, could "unburden the mind from preoccupations such as ritual, worship and invocations to a conceptual deity." Van Loon's comments in the Afrikaans newspaper *Vrye Weekblad* advanced that interpretation. Buddhism, he argued, was not concerned with ritual. Westerners were not required to believe in *Bodhisattvas* "en ander halfgode (and other [Mahayana] half-gods)." Buddhism was primarily concerned with a Theravadin transcendence of ego-centeredness. To be Buddhist, Van Loon asserted, was to acknowledge that there was no such thing as an essence,

'n substansie, of enige ander saak wat op die begrip "ewig"
aanspraak kan maak nie. Ewige dinge is in die waarheid net

fiksie waarmee ons poog om die ewigdurende wisseling van dinge to ontsnap of stop te sit.... Dit is juis die fiksie waarvan die Boeddhisme ons wil bevry (a substance, or any other thing which can be known. All things are in truth only fictions from which we try to secure release or cessation.... This is the fiction that Buddhism wishes to free us from).²⁹

As a philosophical orientation based primarily on the transcendence of ego and on the awareness that, in contrast to the Hindu concept of *atman*, there was no independent or permanently existing self, Buddhism was thought to be compatible with Western sciences. As Felicity Souter Edwards argued, Buddhism was in that regard consistent with contemporary physics insofar as it confirmed "(against substantialism) that all things are indeed empty (and against dualism) that all things are interconnected."³⁰

However, this compatibility between Buddhism and science was advanced at a practical rather than philosophical level at Ixopo, particularly during the numerous meditation retreats. One of the most frequent and respected Theravadin visitors to conduct those retreats was Godwin Samararatne. At one time, like Akong Rinpoche, an hospital porter, Samararatne argued that although traditional Theravadin, "imported" Asian, and Western "Protestant" forms of Buddhism, were useful vehicles, the benefits of Buddhism transcended religious belief and ritual diversity. Belief in rebirth, for example, "would seem to involve a leap of faith out of step with basic Buddhist teachings," he suggested. Indeed, as one "leerling Boeddhis (Buddha-in-training)" at an Ixopo retreat wrote, the philosophical presuppositions of rebirth and Karma were, she thought, so "volksvreemd (culturally strange)" and difficult to believe that they needed to be translated into a more scientific idiom: Karma was like "gravitasie (gravitation)," she proposed. Similarly, stressed Samararatne, Buddhism was a practical and

personal search for a solution to ego-centeredness and suffering, a practice perhaps best advanced in Vipassana insight meditation. In numerous weekend and eight-day retreats, and including, in 1988, a month-long retreat that incorporated formal meditation for a minimum of eight hours a day, starting before dawn, numerous retreatants practiced this technique. Mindful of the body in sitting, eating, and walking, Vipassana meditators experienced, as Felicity Souter Edwards noted in her journal, "insight into *anatta*." Indicating a level of consciousness beyond the personal, the retreats provided "a fleeting glimpse of no-self" and the "dissolution of a boundary between the inside and the outside."³¹

Although compatible with Western science and sub-atomic physics, Buddhist Vipassana meditation was also found to be consistent with transpersonal psychology. Zelda Knight and George Euvrard argued in a paper in the *South African Journal of Psychology* that meditation was one way to promote personal growth, or what the *Manual and Scheme for Work for School Guidance* of the Department of Education of the Cape Province labelled as "the search for self identity ... and the development and fostering of a realistic self image." Knight and Euvrard evaluated the benefits of a three-month Vipassana-meditation program, based on retreats developed by Samaratne and Goldstein, for three South African schoolgirls. They concluded that meditation should be considered for inclusion in school guidance programs.³²

Over the last thirty years, the Buddhist Retreat Center at Ixopo has provided perhaps the most important location for Buddhist practice in South Africa. Its commitment to providing teachers to facilitate meditation highlighted not only the history of religious pluralism in this country but also the diversity and ecumenism of the Buddhist tradition in South Africa. That commitment, however, also established an important text that can be read in order to interpret the meaning of Buddhism in an African context. The

concern to make the exotic familiar and to erase any "extraneous, alien impediment" from what is considered the "purity" of an essentially Theravadin Buddhist practice at Ixopo, for example, can be read as another "fiction" in the advancement of a peculiarly South African understanding of what being Buddhist connotes.

Karma Rigdor Wangmo, endorsing what her teacher, Dhiravamsa, said about outward symbols and forms - that they fragmented life, "creating a division between the ordinary, and tend to prevent the individual from experiencing the wholeness of life" - urged in these terms that Buddhism should have little to do with saffron robes or Asian rituals. Whatever was added to "the four foundations of mindfulness - mindfulness of the body, of feelings, of the mind, and of mind objects - however exotic," was to be discarded. Regarded as a "process of the arising and passing away of phenomena and the cognizance of them," and as "the individual awareness of this unfolding process in life," Buddhism required that any "corporate, contextual identity," any attempt to indigenize Buddhism in a South African idiom, needed to "be dropped." There was nothing wrong, Kama Rigdor Wangmo admitted, in belief or ritual; she chanted the Zen refuge in Buddha, *dharma* and *sangha* most mornings "because it felt good to do so." But she only thought herself Buddhist "out of a deep reverence to the Buddha." "Other than one's gratitude to the Buddha, how could one," she stressed, "call this moment-to-moment experience Buddhist or anything else. It is simply becoming aware of one's nakedness, devoid of all rituals and certain disciplines."³³

The promise that Buddhism is essentially an awareness of momentary arising and dependent coorigination, of *pratityasamutpada*, *anicca* and *anatta*; that Buddhism is neither concerned with ritual or belief, holds important consequences not only for an interpretation of the meaning of Buddhism, but also for an inquiry into the nature and meaning of religion in

South Africa. Cognizant of Karma Rigdor Wang's comments, is it possible, for example, to argue that Buddhism, or any other religion, contains an intrinsic and cohesive structure or a lasting and coherent function? Before addressing these concerns, in the Epilogue and in a narrative history of a commitment to the essential emptiness or *sunyata* of reality implicit to moments in the development of Zen traditions, that I document in the latter half of this chapter, I explore further the unfolding of essentially Theravadin-oriented Buddhist practices in South Africa.

II. Quakers of the Buddhist World

Shortly after the Buddhist Retreat Center at Ixopo was inaugurated another Buddhist group founded on Theravadin principles was formed in 1981 in Pretoria. Consisting of a core membership of eight people, the group comprised an elderly couple, at whose home it met, "a young Afrikaans-speaking girl, who worked in the Pretoria Art Gallery, a few housewives, and fewer students, though never more men than women." Although its orientation was principally Theravadin, a number of members at one time practiced Nichiren Buddhism. The Pretoria Buddhist Group was founded by an ex-Zimbabwean Catholic, Alison Smith, to provide support for people interested in meditation and to teach the basics of Buddhism. It was a non-profit organization with an independent bank account for membership fees and *dana* donations. "The bank teller had a great deal of difficulty pronouncing the word *dharma*," recalled one member. Alison Smith came to South Africa in 1978 to teach Yoga and was first exposed to Buddhism when she attended a lecture by Antony Osler. Subsequently, she visited the Pretoria Art Gallery in 1979, where she saw Molly van Loon's Buddhist Art exhibition. At the gallery she also heard the seventy-four year-old Anagarika

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Govinda stress that Buddhist iconography was "not a matter of aesthetics but of psychology and religious experience ... a way towards inner treasures." (11) She was also impressed by his published proposal that compulsory monastic training would be better than military conscription for men in South Africa. These encounters led Alison Smith to introduce the jewel of Buddhist meditation to her Yoga students.³⁴

Soon afterwards Smith went to Ixopo for a ten-day Vipassana retreat led by Joseph Goldstein, who began practice with a Bengali teacher, Anagarika Munindra, after travelling to India with the American Peace Corps in the early 1960s. Following this retreat, Smith frequently visited Ixopo and met many teachers from diverse traditions. In 1982, when the Sri Lankan *bhikkhu* Venerable Homagamma Kondanna led a meditation weekend in Pretoria, she organized his visit.³⁵

Over the following years Alison Smith helped organize numerous retreats in Pretoria and Johannesburg for the Pretoria Buddhist Group. They were primarily Theravadin in nature because, as she pointed out, other traditions were thought to require specialized and initiated teachers. The Theravadins, by contrast, were considered to allow a more democratic system of self-reliant *dharma* leaders. Theravadin Buddhism was a "do-it-yourself Buddhism that made practice [in South Africa] so different from anywhere else." Although the direct student-teacher relationship implicit to Tibetan practice was very helpful, the South African context often made direct practice impossible, so that, instead of ritual, for example, the reading of books and tapes became the framework upon which most participants "hung their practice." Indeed, it was the necessity for an adequate introductory text on Buddhism, required by the Pretoria Buddhist Group, noted Alison Smith, that led a University of South Africa professor of religion, Jacobus Krüger, to write a highly readable and succinct

introduction to Buddhism in his South African publication, *Buddhism from the Buddha to Asoka*.³⁶

Initially, Pretoria Buddhist Group retreats were held at the private home of a Dutch diplomat, who was a member of the Arya Maitreya Mandala. Although the diplomat's home contained a seven-layered altar and shrine room, the property proved too small: "Some teachers commented on the disconcerting fact that participants had to disappear for the evenings. So [the retreatants] found it very difficult to separate the world of the retreat from that of every-day life." Eventually an hotel-owner sympathetic to the group, and to Lama Anagarika Govinda's order, offered a suite of rooms for use during retreats. In spite of these restrictions, many participants felt that getting up at half past four to do sitting, walking, and noble-silence meditation for most of the day was a very profound experience. Thus, apparently ordinary activities - just sitting, just walking, or just keeping silent - "provided a rigorously structured and supportive environment free from distraction and interruption" that aided "our insight and clarity into the nature of interdependence and non-permanence." As one participant noted, "it was quite difficult having to cook without talking."³⁷

The continued individual practice of the group's members and their resistance to the exoticism of "alien" Vinaya rules demanded what another practitioner called a "fundamental, secular *dharma*." This form of practice, she argued, consisted of the "basic teachings of the Buddha gleaned from either translations of the Pali texts, or as pronounced by reliable current teachers." Secular *dharma* implied only "the basic teachings in their essential purity, divorced from any overlay of folk tales, myth, local superstition, accretion and commentary." Interestingly, although the group resisted the foreign orientalism of Thai culture, for example, focussing instead on Theravadin texts, members did produce one of the first novice Theravadin *bhikkhus* from South Africa: When Dimitri Furneaux left school he joined

the Pretoria Buddhist Group and then went to Ixopo for some time before going to the Chithurst monastery in England, where he lived until 1989, to take monastic precepts.³⁸

For the most part, however, the group remained resistant to ritual. As the "Quakers of the Buddhist world in the West," noted Alison Smith, they only celebrated one ritual festival, Wesak, that was regarded as appropriate for a non-Buddhist country. Initially the group attended Theosophical celebrations of the Buddha's birth, where "we did chanting and we held crystals and all that." But the calendrical ritual was considered to be inconsistent with a more scientific interpretation of Buddhism that merged Theravadin texts and Western practice. Subsequently, Wesak was celebrated in a more traditional style.

This was true also of the Theravadin Cape Town Buddhist Group formed in 1990 when Alison moved to the city and Joseph Goldstein prompted her to continue the work initiated in Pretoria. Placing an advertisement in the local press for a six-week basic Buddhism course, to which more than twenty people subsequently came, the group celebrated Wesak by offering flowers and fruit to an image of the Buddha. A refuge ceremony in Pali was recited "as a type of link to the Buddhist world." This was followed by a description of the life and death of Siddhartha Gautama read from Kruger's published account. The ceremony required "no dancing; no chanting; no crystals."

The Cape Town group consisted, among others, of a matric schoolboy and some young people, as well as a lady in her mid-seventies. Although founded on Theravadin practice, the group was nonetheless ecumenical in outlook, and many practitioners attended retreats from visiting Tibetan and Zen teachers. Weekly meetings also included a formal lecture, lively debate, and a sitting meditation. The meditation was preceded by the sharing of merit, based on a Tibetan Kagyudpa rite, since "most South

11 African Buddhists feel there is an urgent need for compassion in our present society." The recitation of refuge in Pali, although only one person attempted to learn the language, was also included in the weekly meeting. However, the group was democratically organized and at each assembly participants contributed to discussion and teaching. It was a style of practice, noted a Korean member, acupuncturist Jiho Han, somewhat disconcertingly, that was stripped of any Asian myth. As Alison Smith argued:

If I want myth I read science fiction. I don't go, generally, to the Jataka tales [the collection of stories of the previous lives of the Buddha Gautama as a *Bodhisattva* and contained in the *Khuddaka Nikaya*, the tenth book of the Pali canon] and so on. I get more out of an anecdote from an American than I do an Asian myth. I am a modern Westerner. I don't want to study Asian myth. I want to live religion."³⁹

How to navigate a religious life as a Buddhist in South Africa, stripped of Asian artifice or myth and articulated in a Western idiom, was not always easy. But Smith was inclined to think that anyone who tried to live a compassionate and kind life, most succinctly articulated in the Buddhist precepts and in the Buddhist term *karuna*, would make a positive contribution to society. Buddhist commitment was indicated, for example, by the *dana* donations collected by the Pretoria Buddhist Group and given to the Peoples' Dispensary for Sick Animals, and Wesak food offerings donated to the Claremont Night Shelter by the Cape Town Buddhist Group. Similarly, but more forcefully, Michel Clasquin, who in 1990 took over the administration of the Pretoria Buddhist Group, that in 1992 included between five and twenty-five regular members at a weekly meeting and a once-a-month morning meditation session at the Theosophical Society Library, argued that although it was possible to become a quasi-Thai, quasi-Tibetan,

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Theravadin suspicion of "useless speculation," Alison Smith noted that although it was "entirely possible to become enlightened in this life," most people were "so new to *dharma*, they [were] just trying to absorb the basics, never mind trying to worry about Nirvana!" Similarly, although Karma Sonam Lodo recalled that "the notion of Karma and the Four Noble Truths and some of the surrounding teachings [was] crucial" to his interpretation and understanding of Buddhism at Ixopo, and although his practice was not aimed at better rebirth, Nirvana "receded in terms of the goal, because enlightenment is so far [away] and unknown." Consequently, instead of achieving Nirvana, "the essence of Buddhist practice [was] to increase wisdom, compassion, and understanding; to bring about self-actualization and self-potentiality." These essences did not imply that local Buddhist practice was in any way degenerate or philosophically unorthodox. As Martin Southwold and Sherry B. Ortner argued, a *kammatic* orientation could be regarded as more "orthodox" than the goal of immediate *nibbanic* enlightenment. Indeed, Godwin Samararatne, for example, was impressed with the level of "commitment to practice in this country" in spite of the fact that most Buddhists in South Africa knew little more than the basic metaphysics of the tradition.⁴⁶

Alison Smith asserted, therefore, that Buddhism was in "transition" in South Africa. Confronted with a state that did not promote Buddhism, and in which the Buddhist community was essentially non-monastic, Theravadin Buddhists in South Africa adapted Buddhist practices to suit local conditions. For example, South African Buddhists relied on their own abilities rather than on the merits that accumulated from serving monks and nuns in Asian societies. Contrary to some scholarly opinions, Smith suggested, a home-grown Buddhist style was developing in South Africa. In fact, Theravadin Buddhism in South Africa was established in a localized theoretical idiom that was "more Buddhist" than the "syncretic" forms of Buddhism practiced

popularly in Theravadin Buddhist societies in Asia. However, these theoretical expressions of Buddhism in South Africa were also innovatively contextualized. Indeed, specific local practices raised fundamental and persistent questions for Buddhism generally. For example, Smith inquired whether the strength of Buddhism resided in its Asian expression or whether localized praxis, that ameliorated Buddhism in the South African context, distorted the fundamental essence of the tradition? Would contextual innovation, she queried, "breed a hybrid?" Or, was it good Buddhist practice to "adhere blindly to the [Asian Buddhist] tradition" whilst ignoring the possibility of transforming tradition to suit the local context?⁴⁷

These questions of tradition and change, adherence to textual orthodoxy and adaption to contextual locality, occupied Theravadin Buddhists in South Africa. Their approach to Buddhism held an implicit critique. Theravadins dismissed the utility of any Buddhist practice that they imagined was based on ruthless adherence to an Asian ritual idiom, "where the robes, the size, dimension, and position of the altar, and the type of incense and litany" obscured rather than enhanced Buddhist praxis. As one Theravadin Buddhist noted, "it is all very well visualizing hell in Tibetan [Buddhist] colors," but Buddhists in South Africa "know what hell is." Buddhists in South Africa, he stressed, needed to "acculturate Buddhist mythology into a Western paradigm." After all, such a contextual translation, he suggested, "was what the Tibetans did when they adapted Indian Buddhism to suit their own environment in the first place." As Sheila Fugard noted, however, cultural translations of Tibetan Buddhism had occurred in South Africa, when Tibetan sacred specialists were met by South African "sangomas."

In the next section, I develop an inquiry into how local conditions have altered the constitution of Buddhism. Mindful of the questions and criticisms of contextual innovation, I explore another facet of the diversity of

the Buddhist tradition to narrate moments in the emergence and growth of Zen in South Africa. However, in documenting how Zen began to reshape an interpretation of the meaning of Buddhism in localized practices, I also explore ways in which the presence of Zen in South Africa began to reconstruct the meaning of religion. For example, I examine how the Buddhist theory of *pratityasamutpada* and the centrality of the Zen teaching of *sunyata* began to raise questions about the validity of academic concerns with ontological *independence* and dualistic thinking. In response to the Buddhist critique of these Western epistemologies, therefore, I point out that some observers in South Africa are suspicious of any distinction between the terms "Buddhist" and "Non-Buddhist." Alison Smith, for example, noted that many people who have "done a lot of reading about Buddhism but who have not taken refuge or precepts," became involved in Buddhist groups in South Africa. Although these people confirmed "a strong affinity with the Buddhist perception of the world," Smith argued, they were "not groupies and do not like commitment." This did not, she concluded, preclude them from being Buddhist. Indeed, Karma Rigdor Wang stressed that many Buddhists only called themselves Buddhist out of reverence to the Buddha. Many Buddhists in South Africa, foremost among them people who were drawn to Zen, did not use this epithet at all.⁴⁸

III. A Korean Son in the Helderberge

Although the founding in 1982 of a Son (Zen) Center at Somerset West below the Cape Helderberge Mountains signified the resolute establishment of Zen practice in South Africa, earlier initiatives suggested that the *dhyana* tradition that Philip Kapleau-roshi called "the process of concentration and absorption by which the mind is first tranquilized and brought to one-

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pointedness, and then awakened," was influential from at least the late 1970s. Indeed, the history of Zen Buddhism in South Africa was as old and diverse as the history of religious pluralism in the province.⁴⁹

The first Zen Buddhist center established in South Africa, for example, was one that followed a Soto Zen discipline. The Dojo Marisan Nariji was founded in 1979, in Johannesburg, by Taicho (One Hand) Kyogen, a *bhikkhuni* and student of the renowned Soto Zen teacher, Taisen Deshimaru-roshi. Deshimaru-roshi arrived in Paris in 1967 to establish in Europe what he termed "True Zen." By 1990 more than two hundred *dojos* (practice centers) of the *Mission de Maitre Taisen Deshimaru* were established on the continent and abroad, among them a group in the Cameroon. In Paris another student of Deshimaru-roshi, the Afrikaans poet Breyten Breytenbach, recalled the style of Deshimaru-roshi's practice when, in an essay drawing on the experiences of the Zen patriarch Bodhidharma, entitled *Zen in the Way of Being a Prisoner*, or *pi k'uan* (wall gazing), he noted how during nine years of imprisonment for political offenses in South Africa, beginning in 1975, he positioned himself "in that one spot of the cell" in the Pretoria Maximum Security Prison that was unobserved by the warder so as, "for half an hour," to "sit in *zazen*."⁵⁰

The *dojo* in Honeydew, Johannesburg, was not the one that Breytenbach dreamed of establishing when in the novel *A Season in Paradise* he noted that, "as an aged monk seated upright, already in motionless meditation," he would "build a *dojo*, a meditation hall with White walls and an endless host of stars." The Johannesburg *dojo* was, however, one place in which South Africans could pursue one-minded sitting practice, called *zazen*, and *shikan-taza* (literally, "nothing but" "to hit," "to sit") that the founder of Soto Zen, the thirteenth-century monk, Dogen-zenji, advanced, even if, noted Breytenbach, *zazen* "was really a big word for what was little more than sitting crosslegged."⁵¹

The Johannesburg *dojo* was a South African place that offered South Africans exclusive Zen *sesshins* once a week, although the center was open at other times to all schools of Buddhism and available for all teachers to conduct Buddhist meditation practice. The Soto nun, Venerable Taicho Kyogen, ordained by Deshimaru-roshi in Paris in 1975, the same year that Breytenbach was incarcerated, also supervised training retreats, and an annual *rohatsu* or Wesak *sesshin* at a center near Allendale in the Eastern Transvaal that could accommodate "about fourteen mendicants."⁵²

Daily practice during retreats was not unlike that of other Soto Zen centers. Retreatants at week-long *sesshins* woke to a rising bell before dawn and began the day with twenty minutes of *zazen*, "ordering and immobilizing the feet, legs, hands and arms, trunk, and head in the traditional lotus posture, with the regulation of the breath, the methodological stilling of the thoughts and unification of the mind through special modes of concentration." This time was marked by the sound of the *mokugyo*, a wooden, fish-shaped drum that both symbolized and maintained alertness. Following Dogen's prescription in the *Shobogenzo*, one teacher, citing Dogen, described how this bodily space should be ordered and controlled: The retreatant's body should become "like a mountain" in *zazen*, because, firstly, "according to the law of the Buddha," one's body and mind were originally one, and secondly, "the posture of the body in *zazen* is itself not different from the attitude of the non-dual mind it proclaimed." Consequently, ordinary activity, including sitting (*zazen*) and walking (*kinhin*), emphasized the moment-to-moment awareness of the nature of reality as impermanent, codependently emergent, and, like the body-mind, essentially non-dual. Bowing and the Soto tradition of *gassho*, or the respectful placing together of the palms of the hand, was also emphasized, insofar as retreatants were "encouraged to see in everything the possibility of Buddha-nature" or "mind-before-thinking."⁵³

A small group of Sanbo Kyodan, the tradition in which Catholic monk Sepp Anthofer trained and that was founded in 1954 by Hakuun Yasutani-roshi, after he received *inka* (*dharma* transmission) from his teacher Harada-roshi, also began to draw on Soto *zazen* techniques during weekly *sesshins* in Cape Town. Initiated in 1993 by a visiting Viennese judge, Helga Kerschbaum, who was given permission to teach after seventeen years of practice with a Benedictine monk, who, as his refuge name, Koun Ken (Empty Hand) implied, was also a Zen teacher, the group comprised about five regular meditators. Most were in their thirties or early forties; all were "well read professionals" who were acquainted with Hindu philosophy. "But none had experience of *koan* practice," an essentially Rinzai Zen technique that posed a question, formulated in baffling language to probe the participant's perception of the non-dual nature of reality. This technique was used extensively by Yasutani and Harada-roshi to awaken students to the futility of logical reasoning and discursive intellect. Most students of the Cape Town Sanbo Kyodan who attended a two-hour Friday *sesshin*, a twelve-hour Saturday *sesshin*, and a brief Sunday *zazen sesshin*, measured their progress in *koan* practice during *sanzen*, or *dokusan* sessions, at which problems pertaining to individual practice were brought before the teacher.⁵⁴

It was at the Dharma Center in Somerset West, however, that Zen Buddhist practice, including *zazen*, *shikan-taza*, *kinhin*, and *koan* practice, as well as *sutra* and *dharani* chanting, was advanced most visibly and articulated most vociferously. Founded in 1982 by Heila and Rodney Downey, the center was situated under the Helderberge, the Clear Mountains at the Cape, where a large Dharma Room, or *Son Bang*, that could seat thirty-five meditators, was set in two acres of secluded garden. The Downeys were originally inspired to start a meditation group by the Vipassana teacher Joseph Goldstein, whom they met at Ixopo. But in 1985, when it was registered as an ecclesiastical organization, the center established firm links

with the Rochester Zen Center, founded in 1966 in New York by Philip Kapleau-roshi. The style and teaching of Buddhism in Somerset West soon reflected that of Kapleau's, who, as Charles Prebish noted, was one of Harada-roshi's most influential disciples and the person who, perhaps more than any other, promoted Zen as a non-Asian religious practice in the West. Travelling frequently to Rochester to train and receive teaching, the Downeys adapted Zen to suit South African non-Asian sentiment. Western clothing was initially worn during *zazen*, for example, and chanting was done through the medium of English. The approach was similar to the styles found in centers established by Kapleau-roshi's students, noted one observer: Zen took place "without any religious symbols, rituals, and authority."⁵⁵

When in 1989 the renowned Korean Son Master, Seung Sahn (Dae Soen Sa Nim) visited South Africa, however, a fundamental change transpired in the approach to Zen practice at the Dharma Center. An altar was built in the Dharma Room, bedrooms were converted to sleeping accommodation for twenty-five people, and the center became a formal affiliate of the Kwun Um School of Korean Son, a school, founded in 1983 by Master Seung Sahn, that literally meant "perceive sound" school. As an organizational structure bringing together more than fifty centers, one of which was the Somerset West Kwun Um School of Korean Chogye Son, Kwun Um, argued Master Seung Sahn, emphasized that in "perceiving world sound [we perceive] that many, many beings are suffering. If you can hear this sound of suffering, then helping is both possible and necessary."⁵⁶

Korean Chogye Son was an independent Zen tradition, named after the mountain in South China, called Ts'ao-Chi Shan, where the sixth Zen patriarch, Hue-neng, built his temple, and that, when monks returned to Korea to establish the so-called "Nine Mountain" Schools of Son, occasioned the development a predominantly *koan* style of practice. This style was said to predate the Lin-Chi or Japanese Rinzai School, and was a form of

practice, noted Master Seung Sahn, that was "not dependent on Buddha, on *dharma*, on God - not dependent on anything." It did require, however, a special "medicine," a chanting and bowing medicine. "Every morning we bow one hundred and eight times. Every morning and evening we chant for half an hour. It is easy to keep a clear mind during bowing and chanting," noted the Zen Master, "because they are nonthinking actions." This Oriental medicine, he suggested, was very good for Western people who were "filled with thinking and addicted to meaning."⁵⁷

Dependent neither on the Buddha, nor on the teachings of the Buddha-*dharma*, Korean Chogye Son was nonetheless Buddhism. The style of Buddhist practice, as Paul Croucher noted, was one of the most dynamic of Buddhist traditions in the late twentieth century. It awakened the power of the tiger. As I recalled, the tiger appeared in a South African history of Buddhism, from Buddhist teachings at Tiger Kloof, near Vryburg, in 1910, to Akong Rinpoche's "taming the tiger therapy" more than a half-century later. The Tibetan Kagyudpa lama, Ole Nydahl, recounted his travels to South Africa in a published account called *Riding the Tiger: The Risks and Joys of Bringing Tibetan Buddhism to the West*. The tiger, however, was also central to Korean Son practice. During Yong Maeng Jong Jin retreats, promised Seung Sahn, Son Buddhist practice caused the retreatant "when sitting to leap like a tiger." It was an approach to *zazen* and to Zen Buddhist practice, however, that the American Son *bhikkhu* Mu-shin Su Nim did not think would be present in South Africa. "When I came [to this South African retreat with Master Seung Sahn] I expected to see elephants and lions in the jungle. But what I was not prepared for, and am delighted to see, are the tigers in the *zendo*."⁵⁸

Persistently viewed as an errant deviation, or an illusory and romantic interlude, a travesty of true religion, the Dharma Center at Somerset West, like other Buddhist centers in South Africa, received some adverse publicity.

Jane Nash, in an article in the *Middle Way* entitled, "Tip of the Tiger's Tail," reflected on how it would be "preferable if our centers could come to be accepted as a permanent, if new, part of South Africa's evolving culture, and not as some weird and wondrous aberration of the love-beads-and-rawhide-sandals brigade." The degree of committed practice and training among Buddhists at South African Kwun Um centers, however, did reflect that evolving culture, rather than the romantic or exotic invention that was present in the media and in earlier travelogues. In 1990, for example, Heila Downey, who received the *dharma* name Poep Dae (*Dharma* Light), travelled to Korea to take the ten teachers' precepts. A number of South Africans also attended the winter Kyol Che (Tight *Dharma*) *rohatsu* retreat in Korea in 1992. For ninety days, rising at 3.30 A.M., they participated in the ceremonial life of the temple. In accordance with monastic practice, they shaved their heads and wore the traditional clothing of the Korean *bhikkhu* or *bhikkhuni*.⁵⁹

Although some students travelled to Korea, the center of their Korean Son practice remained in South Africa. The Somerset West *zendo* defined the space and time of practice, however, in keeping with the specific regulations of Korean tradition. The structure of the *zendo*, for example, conformed to a Korean Son architectural style. Besides an altar, upon which was placed a Buddha and Kwan Seum Bosal (Avalokitesvara) *rupa*, and the *zafu* cushions and *zabutan* mats used for *zazen*, the Dharma Room was marked by an absence of ornament. That absence was true of the room set aside for *dokusan*, which contained a small mirror over the altar, symbolizing "our pure, original mind; our mind-before-thinking." Time also was measured in accordance with Son monastic practice, since the sound of a wooden *moktak* and brass *keisu* bowl kept rhythm during *kido* chanting retreats. Conducted in Korean, although an English translation and phonetic transcription was

available, the language of the retreats endorsed the creation of that alternate Asian time and space.

Although such prescriptions were in effect during week-end and weekly *sesshins* when, collapsing the distance between an Asian religious place and African sacred space, retreatants entering the *zendo* wore the grey Korean robe tied in keeping with Korean, monastic tradition, regulations regarding practice were more rigorously enforced during retreats conducted by visiting teachers. The prescriptions for practice that ruled when Master Seung Sahn led a retreat at Somerset West in 1989, and when, in the following years, Seung Sahn's students Mu Shin Su Nim, Su Bong Soen Sa, and Mu Deung Su Nim arrived, the last to become, until his death in 1994, "guiding teacher" for South Africa, were notable. However, some participants asserted that these Korean ritual prescriptions, that included specific considerations for eating, conducted in noble-silence, were more a hindrance than a help. The use of Asian implements and four special *oryoki* bowls that were cleaned out "with tea, using our index finger," constituted reasons for a number of complaints. As one participant noted:

I found the strict adherence to ritual form irritating and militaristic. [Master Seung Sahn] wanted the cushions straight. And all the bowing when you come in and leave, and having to take your shoes off. And the way that the *moktak* has to be put back at a certain time and the candles blown out after chanting. When we wear the robes the bows have to be tied exactly right. The first retreat we went on we did not realize things had to be done so precisely.⁶⁰

Although the retreat program was austere, and rising to the sound of a gong at dawn to do one hundred and eight bows "at first seemed senseless and strange," the retreatant noted, "after a while it seemed dignified and

appropriate and you realized how much unnecessary energy was being expended with constant talking." By conforming to Korean ritual and communal activity, and being mindful, as the classic *Satipatthana-Sutta* suggested, of the nature and functioning of the body while sitting, walking, bowing, chanting, and eating, all defined by the minimizing of extraneous activity and talking, it was possible, suggested the Somerset West Dharma Center teacher Poep Dae, both in published accounts and during the period of *teisho* that followed *zazen*, in which she provided commentary on practice, to "experience reality unencumbered by words and ideas."⁶¹

In this sense, Zen practice pointed to a specific state of awareness in which, suggested Master Seung Sahn, it was possible to "understand yourself ... to attain correct way and correct life" and to overcome attachment to all opposites. Although "all things in the universe - the sun, the moon, the stars, mountains, rivers, people, and so forth - had different names and forms," and although the universe was organized into "pairs of opposites: light and darkness; man and woman; sound and silence; good and bad," all opposites were mutually dependent "because they were made from the same substance." As Master Seung Sahn contested:

Name and forms are made by your thinking. If you are not thinking and have no attachment to name and form, then all substance is one. Your don't-know-mind cuts off all thinking. This is your substance. The substance of the Zen [*kotsu*] stick and your own substance are the same. You are the stick; this stick is you.⁶²

Although master Seung Sahn articulated the essence of Zen in these non-dual terms many South Africans continued to query what the correct way of life implied? According to Poep Dae the correct way was "transcendental aloneness." The way required "seeing things as they are" in a state "freed

from intellectual attachment." That freedom necessarily led to compassion for all sentient beings. If one turned to Zen only for peace of mind, practice would lead to a glorified form of ego-centered divisiveness. Taking refuge in the *Bodhisattva* vow of the Mahayana Buddhist, and working toward the attainment of self-realization in *zazen*, necessarily led to the "realization of the interconnectedness and oneness of all things." The awareness of the nature of reality, of *pratityasamutpada*, moreover, implied that being "involved in the suffering of others is not just a logical consequence but an unavoidable inner exigency." Accordingly, the pain of an Other was also the suffering of a "Self."⁶³

Subverting the oppositional and binary taxonomies that were implicit in the imaginative, travelling inventions of nineteenth-century spiritual cartographers and Orientalists, the Zen center at Somerset West advocated non-dualist forms of compassionate, active praxis. Indeed, as Antony Osler mused, in an essay reminiscent of earlier collections of *koan*, and entitled "Buddhism in a New South Africa: Buddhism in an Old South Africa - Same or Different," because in South Africa "we see pain all around us," perhaps there was no "better place to practice."⁶⁴

Although unclear as to the exact orientation of Buddhist engagement, one retreatant noted that it was time "to get off the *zafu*; to roll up the sleeves." For Antony Osler, who with Poep Dae took teacher's precepts with Seung Sahn in Korea, one form of compassionate action was to provide legal and supportive aid for Buddhists who objected, on Buddhist grounds, to serve in the South African Defence Force during the 1980s. Both he and Poep Dae became advisors to the Board for Religious Objection.⁶⁵

Essentially, however, Zen was "just everyday mind," a way of "seeing things the way they are" by developing a "transcendental aloneness," as Poep Dae translated the term. Zen was an individual, self-reliant practice that, although it led to "fellowship with everything," was nevertheless "an

aloneness that is a circle whose circumference is nowhere and whose center is everywhere." Zen implied, therefore, that compassion would be the consequence of a non-dual mind, an empty mind, or "the face before one was born," as the *Hekigan-Roku* (*Blue Rock Records*) related. But Zen also allowed for the possibility that a person could practice Zen Buddhism without being Buddhist. Indeed, Dries van Straaten stressed that after twelve years of *zazen*, four times a week, including *kido* chanting on a Sunday, he remained a Christian. Although many people, "especially Afrikaners," deemed Buddhism to be a form of "afgodedienery en 'n afsny van die wereld (idolatry and reclusiveness)," Zen Buddhism was neither a form of Satan-worship nor nihilism. Bowing or *gassho* to the Buddha, asserted Van Straaten, was a way of honoring the Buddha within. In fact, as Sepp Anthofer's Catholic initiative suggested, the Buddha's teaching concerning compassion was not antithetical to the Christian Gospel. However, as a Johannesburg Zen practitioner endorsed, the Buddhist understanding of Karma appeared a more subtle philosophy than Christian theodicy. Although this practitioner regarded herself as neither strictly Buddhist nor Christian, she thought that Buddhism helped one "leef in die hier en nou (live in the here and now)," unlike Christianity, in which one was "net 'n sondaar (just a sinner)." For popular Afrikaans actor Tobie Cronje, who "found Zen difficult to explain to family and friends," Zen was merely a practice that just "helped me cope."⁶⁶

IV. Koans in Colesburg

Zen Buddhists began to practice in many South African towns in the late 1980s. In East London, for example, an elderly couple who first took refuge with the Kagyudpa teacher Akong Rinpoche in 1988 wrote of how they

found Zen practice to be "simple and directly relevant to daily life." The Ribbets noted that, unlike "the trappings of philosophy which deceive so many Westerners," Zen enhanced the essential purity of "clear mind, your own mind before thinking." In Johannesburg and Pretoria, where a "rapprochement" between Theravadin and Zen groups occurred, a number of Buddhists began to introduce Zen techniques, including *zazen*, to their Vipassana-oriented discipline.⁶⁷

The practice of these Zen Buddhists in Johannesburg and Pretoria received support from a number of visiting Zen teachers. Among them was Stephen Batchelor, who arrived in 1992, having trained as a Tibetan *bhikkhu* in Dharmasala, under Geshe Rabten, and as a Zen teacher at the Songgwand Sa Son monastery in Korea, under Kusan Su Nim. It was Batchelor who concluded his account of the translation of Buddhism into Europe with a postscript on the beginnings of Buddhism in Africa, at the Theravadin Buddhist center at Ixopo. Steve Allen, who arrived in South Africa in 1987, also toured the country conducting Zen retreats in Ixopo, in Somerset West, and at the Marisan Nariji *dojo* in Johannesburg. Allen trained as a Soto monk with Shunryu Suzuki-roshi at the San Francisco Zen Center at a time when the Beat poets, including Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti, and, as I recalled, South African poet Sheila Fugard, began to promote Buddhism. He argued that most South Africans, like the Beat poets of the 1960s, misinterpreted what Buddhism was all about. According to Allen, Zen immersed one "all the time in disciplined practices based on sets of rules and regulations - exactly what the hippies were running away from" when they used mind-altering substances. As Seung Sahn also wrote, taking psychedelics to help one cope was a type of special "medicine" that was easy to become attached to. Zen practice, by contrast, offered a form of medicine that freed a person from attachment to conceptual thinking within a framework of strict practice.⁶⁸

Because of the continued support of Korean Kwun Um School teachers, the Korean Son Centers - at the *dojo* in Johannesburg; at the Poplar Grove Zen Center in Colesburg; and at the Bamboo Grove Zen Center in Grahamstown - managed to develop that structural framework most significantly. In fact, as Master Seung Sahn noted, places like Grahamstown and Colesburg were ideally and unusually suited to develop Zen practice. These localities provided "a wonderful situation - a small, trusting, harmonious community." In fact, Seung Sahn commented wryly to students in Grahamstown, "if you do not practice [here] what else will you do?"⁶⁹

The Grahamstown Korean Son Center was established in 1991 after five people, including a teacher at Rhodes University, took refuge with Master Seung Sahn during a retreat in the town. Each person took the five precepts and was given a *dharma* name, that began, unlike the Tibetan Kagyudpa prefix "Karma" (signifying refuge in the compassion of the Karmapa), with the word "Poep," a Korean word for *dharma* that, Poep In (*Dharma Seal*) remarked, was also a singularly South African word. Attempting to erase the defilements of dualistic thinking, however, each precept-taker also received a *koan* based on the problem "of sameness or difference, so that we learn not to attach ourselves to the notion of polarization." These *koans* were important instruments in helping students to cope with life in the South African situation, noted Poep In, who reflected that, although she did not know much about the distinctions between Theravada and Mahayana philosophy, she was attracted to Mahayana Buddhist practice because of its teaching on non-dualism and its stress on the *Bodhisattva* vow of compassion, namely, "that our life is not our own; that our life is for other beings." Poep In recalled that as a Buddhist, life was to be "directed for the benefit of the world and not for self-enhancement."

Although Buddhists at the Bamboo Grove Korean Son center in Grahamstown, where she taught, hardly ever discussed the implications of

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this vow, Poep In, at whose home the group met, stressed that the polarity of apartheid ideology provided a profound example of the consequences of polarized thinking. Commitment to the *Bodhisattva* vow of Mahayana Buddhist compassion, however, could overcome racism. Indeed, by "just sitting," as the Buddha sat under the *bodhi* tree, the mind of the meditator, she commented, would "become clear, like water." By stilling the mind in this way, "all our actions will be compassionate. This will help to save all beings."⁷⁰

The ordinariness of "just sitting," therefore, was what being Buddhist most fundamentally implied for Poep In. However, weekly practice at the center in Grahamstown continued in the strict tradition of the Korean Kwun Um school, supported by visits in 1991 by Mu Deung Su Nim, and in 1993 by Su Bong Soen Sa. That Korean discipline included the daily practice of one hundred and eight bows, half an hour of Korean *kido* chanting, and half an hour of *zazen*, although a number of Tibetan Buddhists who met for weekly Chenresig *pujas* and came to the center after beginning a Tibetan Therapy group refrained from the prescribed bowing.⁷¹

Notwithstanding that the Korean Zen center was a residential property, Bamboo Grove, particularly during retreat times, was reordered as an architectural arena that conformed to the standards of a Korean *Son Bang*. For example, the lounge was transformed into a *zendo* that, with the exception of a small altar, was emptied entirely except for those items necessary for sitting in *zazen*. Like the Dharma Center in Somerset West, the perimeter of the room was covered with a number of *zabutan* mats and *zafu* cushions. Spatial organization was also controlled temporally. Time was managed by an highly stratified social order, including a timekeeper (*jikido*), bell ringer (*desho*), and chant leader (*ino*). At this center and at Colesburg, where Antony Osler converted a Karoo barn "for *koan* practice," retreatants were nonetheless aware that it was the reconstitution of a body-space, rather

than any building, that truly constituted a sacred place. The momentary centering of the mind-body, with the spine positioned "like a mountain" and the hands in a particular *mudra*, called *sashu*, was the temporal nexus of Buddhist sacrality. The transformed body, instead of the Son Buddhist center in the Helderberge Mountains or at Ts'ao-Chi Shan in South China, configured and defined a sacred ritual site. Zen practice was in part, therefore, as sociologist David L. Preston suggested, "a body-based training, rooted in experience rather than entirely in either belief or faith, or in language-based categories for knowing." To be Buddhist, Preston argued, following Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who suggested that the body operated as the principle source of signification, was "to be aware of the processes of training that cultivated an alternative way of experiencing the body" as itself a type of temple.⁷²

Although Korean chanting and *koans* were employed to help "the mind to leap out of its bondage" during retreats and in individual private practice, Son practices, and the *kido sesshins* in which retreatants chanted in Korean, were employed to articulate "a verbalism," suggested Dharma Center teacher Poep Dae, that "violated the rules of linguistics." Thus, she argued, Zen practice deemphasised language and intellectual inquiry. Silence was maintained. Little social greeting was required. No deviation from the *sesshin* schedule was allowed. As a result, participants entered an experience of non-dualism and non-attachment, of clear mind, or "mind before thinking," that was uncommunicable in words; a sacrality, as Mircea Eliade instructs, that was "camouflaged in the profane," in just sitting, just walking, just eating.⁷³

Clearly, the minutiae of ritual performances and adherence to ritual procedures at these Zen centers, including specific considerations for the ways in which to sit, walk, talk, or eat, mediated the meaning of Buddhism for practioners of Zen in South Africa. However, rather than enhancing an

awareness of the permanence and individualism of a Buddhist Self, these rituals paradoxically reduced the possibility of any self-consciously Buddhist identity. The collective absolutization of ritual Buddhist practices were promoted to erase attachment and inaugurate a sense of the interdependence of all beings instead of an independent, or "Buddhist" identity. The elimination of personally identifiable property during retreats at Somerset West, Grahamstown, and Colesburg, including watches and brightly-colored clothing, attests to the procedure.⁷⁴

The consequences of trying to interpret the meaning of Buddhism in South Africa, in a context where "object" and "subject" are integrated in an unconditioned chain of dependent coorigination, or *pratityasamutpada*, and where the truth of Buddhist practice is advanced in the elimination of all such dualistic thinking are profound. Can one, for example, as Martin Southwold noted, seek to make sense out of Buddhism in a study of its rituals? Since Buddhist rituals at the Somerset West Dharma Center and at Zen centers in Grahamstown and Colesburg were designed to reduce any sense of autonomy or independent "Buddhist" identity, to focus on ritual to uncover the meaning of Buddhism "appears decidedly eccentric." Conversely, to focus on Buddhist belief seems absurd when, as Poep In argued, the "most important thing for me is practice. Sitting and chanting. But mostly sitting. It is almost as specific as that."⁷⁵

What then is Buddhism if it cannot be mediated, but only narrated, principally, by the ritual "debris" of refuge, robes, or retreat? What is the threshold of a commitment to Buddhism when refuge or precept ceremonies do not mark "conversion" but are only supports eventually to be discarded? Perhaps the classificatory category of Buddhism itself is far too fluid for any form of nineteenth-century fixture? Perhaps there can be no generic notion, in the Linnaean sense, and no useful interpretive inquiry as long as these surveys reflect, primarily, a peculiarly Western, an Other preoccupation. As

long as the pursuit to hang moment-to-moment awareness, or *pratityasamutpada*, on an uncommon architecture prevails, Buddhism will remain elusive. Perhaps, as "Uncle Tao" - a thinly disguised reference to the Afrikaans philosopher and, like C. Louis Leipoldt, cook and poet, Marthinus Versveld - notes, Buddhism

is nothing. It is the absence of veils, and of mist on the mirrors of our mind. Bedeviled as we are in the West by a slavery to abstractions, by a theology which is often word-game, and, in this country by isms and partial perspectives, the illumination that "Zen is our ordinary mind," that is, our whole mind, will prove a great healing.⁷⁶

It is to this concern for an absent ontological identity that a history of Buddhism in South Africa now leads. In attempting to revisit and explore more analytically some of the central moments in a fabric that it comprises, however, I again examine ways in which Buddhism was both imagined as an aberrant, errant exaggeration and as that which continues to be mediated by an appeal to the "orthodoxy" of textual invention. Uncovering that impulse I provide at least one moment in which, as Jonathan Z. Smith wrote, we can begin both to dismantle "old theological/imperialist impulses toward totalization, integration, and unification" and, in the words of Marthinus Versveld, "rise above the religious and political imperialism which prevents our knowing the ... world's religions." By considering a history of Buddhism, we can learn to recover a religious history, an alternate sacred topography in South Africa.⁷⁷

Epilogue

Tell me. *Dhammapada*? Who was this *Dhammapada*?
(Judge Steyn, Bloemfontein, Orange Free State, 1987).¹

Uncovering moments of ellipsis and erasure, outlining events of the aberrant and uncelebrated, and extending the caprice of a perhaps not too predictable but overdue trespass, I suggested one narrative among many possible narratives of a history of Buddhism in South Africa. Advancing an alternate *vamsa*, initiated in accord with what at first might appear as an anachronistic event, an incipient shipwreck that, as Sheila Fugard observed, was a symbolic event, an allegory, or *koan* that "we have always known," I lifted a history of Buddhism from the footnotes of what Mircea Eliade called "concrete, historical time." In opposition to the totalizing temporality of a Christian calendar that to date characterizes the history of religions in this region, I suggested an alternate narrative of the sacred in South Africa.²

Illustrated with the fluid interpretations of Losar, Wesak, and the Paper Tiger Year; with Buddhist time marked by a *moktak* or *mokugyo* at *sesshin*; or Christian communion and conformity to Tibetan time denoted when Rob Nairn controlled the church-clock at Nieu Bethesda, I have, however, not only documented an alternate *history* of religions in South Africa. Encountering an impertinent but pervasive periphery and exploring one of the many margins of human meaning I have also provided an alternate

geography of the religions of South Africa. I noted, for example, how Buddhists were perceived to abide outside any imagining of religion or to be alien to any familiar constructs of sacrality or humanity. But I also asserted that Buddhists in South Africa were at the centre of an abiding fear and fascination with what at first appeared exotic, but that, I noted, was not only not foreign but perhaps internally epiphenomenal. Indeed, South Africa was viewed as an *axis mundi* of Buddhist geomancy, in the Copper Colored Mountains to which Padmasambhava flew in Tibetan mythology.

As part of this confusing and confounding perception, this alternative vision of chronology and topography, I directed my gaze at what was concealed and ignored, what was disavowed or deemed *volksvreemd* (culturally strange) and forbidden. I did so in order to redress an imbalance in accounts of the religions of South Africa and in order both to make this familiar historical landscape strange and the strangeness of Buddhism more familiar. In Part One, however, I exaggerated the strangeness of Buddhism as it was marshalled in the imaginative and inventive perceptions of travellers. Inaugurated in order to compensate for the myopia of ignorance, these perceptions and rhetorical strategies of representation, descriptive detail, measurement, and structural opposition that produced the effect of truth, I suggested, provided a written account, tabulated in travelogues available to Cape readers and etched in illuminating illustrations, that confirmed preconceptions of Buddhism as weird or bizarre, or as remote from any meaning of religion. Buddhism was idolatrous or, as an antithesis to true religion, satanic. As Claude Levi-Strauss emphasized, however, the distance of this perception was a necessary prerequisite for an adequate epistemology. The travellers' encounter with the tropic of an Other thus marked the beginning of anthropological inquiry and was a necessary moment insofar as it offered "a mirror in which to see a secret face." Initially, however, South African travellers and their readers doubled the

distance of perception to perpetuate, in an inversion of Melford Spiro's phrase, the view that a "Buddhist Brother" was persistently an "Anthropological Other."³

Although some continuity can be observed between these seventeenth and eighteenth-century reports, in the nineteenth century a new order of knowledge indexed and tabulated Buddhism in "scientific" classificatory comparisons. Based on linguistic studies, the developing science of a comparative study of religion made Buddhism meaningful only in the confines of taxonomic analysis and the domestication of the "exotic" in collections of textual control. Confined to the archive and museum, to systematic classification, historical reconstruction, and the inventory of religious concepts, Buddhism was erased of any living ontology in a panoptically totalizing vision. To use Martin Jay's phrase, this "empirical vision" was more "an empire of the gaze," colonizing and domesticating the strange in order to make it familiar, than it was a search for any shared humanity or any sense of the Self in an Other.⁴

These strategies of invention, representation, and textual manipulation were present in a South African imagining of Buddhism. Indeed, the Cape became a centre rather than a maritime margin for encountering Buddhism, even if interpretations of that religion reinforced European cultural mores and reflected the concerns and interests of European Christian polemicists. However, as they began to write about Buddhism in local ecclesiastical journals in the nineteenth century, South Africans did not merely invoke images of Buddhism that were consonant with that religion's invention in the travellers' iconic account or the Orientalists' index. A few South Africans began to show an interest in Buddhist thought and practice because they perceived that a number of continuities existed between that religion and the popular aspects of some Western philosophical traditions. Romantics, Spiritualists, Theosophists, and Rationalists, among others, thus

imaginatively appropriated Buddhist thought in variously exotic or intellectualist idioms. Buddhism was even perceived to be analogous to some forms of African religious practice. Rather than establishing the conditions by which Buddhism might better be interpreted, therefore, these impulses again distorted the meaning of Buddhism by conditioning any encounter on an internal ideological or spiritual agenda. Such explanatory paradigms and strategies of initial disapproval and later appropriation habitually conditioned a South African opinion of and association with Buddhism. These strategies, I suggested, were to be expected, because Buddhism is always reinvented in local, contextual interpretation. A cursory glance at contextual impulses in South African literature, that I alluded to in previous chapters, but that requires a far more incisive inquiry than is possible here, is instructive.

Wilhelm Bosman's volume of short stories, published in 1941 as *The Romance of Poverty*, for example, collectively recounted *romantic* narratives of Buddhist heroes and heroines in a pervasively Christian idiom. His stories of heroines included, for example, the legend of Kuan-Yin (Avolokitesvara), the "Holy Virgin of the East," whose death was accompanied by many signs and wonders, including the collapse of mountains and the darkening of the sun. Not unlike Olfert Dapper's much earlier invention of the virgin Pot-sou and her son Kachu, Bosman perceived Buddhism to be an exile to the category of religion. Buddhism was, however, also an alien Oriental abuse inconsistent with theistic truth: In an invective against Asia prior to the Second World War, Bosman noted that in "such a philosophy there is no room for God [and where] there is no room for God, there is no room for Truth ... hence Japanese diplomacy allies itself with that of Germany." Other South African writers and poets were more sympathetic if not romantic in their interpretations of Buddhism. Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm*, and her narrative the *Buddhist Priest's Wife*, published a half century earlier in 1889, drew on Theosophical and Transcendentalist impulses,

"forged [by encounters with] British freethinkers attracted to the undogmatic and searching nature of Buddhism" to help readers "escape from reality into the abstraction and mysticism of the East."⁵

Similarly, C. Louis Leipoldt's journey to Java and Ceylon illustrated at times a romantic interest in the tradition, albeit that interpreters sought to deride his description of and commitment to Buddhism as either "vague feelings" for the "prikkelend-soete van Oosterse-eksotiese (tantalizing sweetness of Asian exoticism)," or as "eclectic dilettantism" and "flirtation." Many interpreters, however, argued that Leipoldt's interest, inheriting an earlier imagination of Buddhism in South Africa, was not merely a romantic interlude but an abnormal, satanic, even criminal deviance. Questioning whether this was "kuns of duiwelkuns (art or sorcery)," Gerrit Dekker, for example, noted that of all Afrikaans-language writers none was so "ver van sy volk af (far from his people)" as was the poet considered to reside at the center of Afrikaans nationalism. As a "Boedhis," who placed alien ideals above those of his own country, South Africans needed to question whether Leipoldt still loved his land: "Mens vra jou af of hy sy land ... nie meer liefgehad het as sy volk nie." Likewise, Breyten Breytenbach, who alluded in his own writings to Leipoldt's inability to integrate adequately a Buddhist belief into poetic language because of his Christian missionary upbringing, was also viewed as antagonistic to religion and the "love of nation." The literary theorist H. M. Viljoen, for example, deemed Breytenbach's poetry as "anti-God" and, consequently, as a form of political profanation, as "anti-Afrikaans." Similarly, N. P. van der Colf noted that, "emigrating" from Christian belief, Breytenbach's Buddhist practice was an "outlandish" inversion of Christianity that placed the poet and painter outside of a South African Christian imagining of religion.⁶

Moving from imagination to practice, I undertook in Part Two a more contextual, multivocal, and localized account of the meaning of Buddhism.

Instead of trying, as the South African writer Arnold Watkins did in the *Cape Illustrated Magazine* of 1891, to provide "a translation" of Buddhism, "so called after its founder, Gautama Buddha," and made difficult because "we have no authentic account, and indeed the history is so much legend mixed up with fact that it is very difficult to separate them," I terminated the teleological desire to pursue Buddhism as a fixed, textual object of imagination and instead viewed the tradition as something continually innovated in local, contextual praxis.

The central question arising from this juxtaposition, this dialectic, however, is: What makes the latter representation any less bizarre or any more accurate an account of the meaning of Buddhism than the former? If in Part One I highlighted preconceptions and representational strategies that distorted and misinterpreted Buddhism by exploding through irony its apparent Otherness, or evacuated Buddhism of independent existence outside of its similitude or consistency with the reinforcement of a European Self, what are the preconditions necessary to interpret the meaning of Buddhism that South Africans can employ to inflate what the census collapses? Indeed, what makes the "truth effects" of the narrative in Part Two any less voyeuristic and dehumanizing than those employed in the travelogues of earlier voyagers?

One precondition, I suggest, that is necessary for any such inquiry is to employ an analytical tool and research method internal to the tradition itself. Although I noted that scholars are stuck perhaps with the rhetorical devices of taxonomy, genealogy, and morphology, mobilizing the theoretical models implicit to European, "Western" concerns, as I asserted, either perpetuated perceptions of Buddhism as outlandish, "Eastern," and alien to the categories of "genuine," Christian religion, or erased any distinctiveness by reducing this Buddhist "object" to merely a moment in self-conscious signification. Thus, in order to explore more accurately the meaning of

Buddhism, travellers, Orientalists, Theosophists, Romantics, and Rationalists *integrated* internal concerns to survey Buddhist thought and practice rather than *detach* themselves from this internal agenda - a necessary shift in perception and intention, not unlike a Buddhist epistemology, that was also reflected in the movement from scientific strategies of surveillance to a more detached interpretive optic which, Roland Barthes noted, provides for a more "perverse," "fetishistic," or "playful" inquiry than any "paranoiac" interpretation.⁷

One such strategy, perhaps, that avoids this paranoia, this fear of an Other, is an interpretation, an archaeology implicit within the detached distance of structuralist discourse. This is a tropic of travel writing, premised like earlier, Orientalist interpretation on the structure of language, that attempts, however, to "restore the exotic with the help of fragments and debris" without erasing or domesticating the Other in the museum or catalogue of this adventure. Seeking to interpret the Self in an encounter with this Other, the familiar is made foreign, the strange habitual, and, as the French structuralist Claude Levi-Strauss further suggested, Buddhism becomes the "maternal breast" rather than a foreign beast.⁸

This is not as absurd an inquiry and as wild a juxtaposition as one might at first assume: Continuities between structuralist theory and Buddhist thought were suggested by, among others, the historian of religion Ivan Strenski and Nobel laureate Octavio Paz, the latter whose "dashing tour through this territory" was reprinted in the Afrikaans literary journal *Standpunte* when Andre Brink translated Paz's *Introduction*. Ivan Strenski, for example, noted some of the continuities between structuralism and Buddhist thought, pointing to an internal line of influence traced from Schopenhauer, perhaps the first modern European to popularize and develop Buddhist ideas, to the architect of structuralist analysis, Levi-Strauss, who

devoted the last chapter of his autobiography, *Tristes Tropiques*, published in 1955, to an appreciation of Buddhism.⁹

Advancing a synthesis of anthropological responsibility, Marxist theory, and Buddhist soteriology, Octavio Paz similarly employed a decidedly Buddhist metaphor to propose a method of investigation wherein "each step [is] simultaneously a return to the starting point and an advance to the unknown." Like the Buddhist, but in opposition, as H. Stuart Hughes observed, to the pretension of a "universal history which vainly tries to reduce plurality" and erase Otherness in an homogenizing verisimilitude, Paz, like Levi-Strauss, provided "a vitalizing vision [where] there are no marginal peoples and [where] the plurality of cultures is illusory, because it is a plurality of metaphors which say the same thing." In the words of Levi-Strauss, bowing with a Burmese Buddhist before a *Buddha-rupa*, structuralism simply "payed homage to [this] decisive reflection which had been formed twenty-five centuries earlier."

For what, after all, have I learnt from the masters I have listened to, the philosophers I have read, the societies I have investigated, and that very Science in which the West takes such pride? Simply a fragmentary lesson or two which, if laid end to end, could reconstitute the meditations of the Sage at the foot of his tree.¹⁰

Premised, therefore, more on structural connections between Buddhism and structuralism than on any historical foundation, this theoretical commitment and compassion, this "*Bodhisattva*-like vision," in Strenski's terms, might open one window into a more accurate account of the meaning of Buddhism. That vision is focused on a detached interest; on the dismissal of an independent and transcendent ego; and on an interdependent, anti-dualist dialectic. That vision recalls a Buddhist ethos insinuated in the awareness of a

society conditioned by *pratityasamutpada*, rather than by nineteenth-century catalogues of the perceived dichotomy between Occident and Orient. That structuralist vision is the optic I employ to revisit the narrative history of Buddhism in South Africa.¹¹

In order once again to survey this narrative history, this sacred geography, therefore, I follow the nineteenth-century Buddhist thinker Inoue Enryō to suggest that the structure, the *sutra* of a South African encounter with Buddhism, "is similar to a tapestry [where] time is the warp and space the woof [from which appear] the myriad patterns that are the metamorphoses of all things." Outlining this structured space and time, I take refuge in three signs, three icons of an alternate *tiratana*. The first is a condition of space: The mountains that provided a topography to the history of Buddhism in South Africa. The second is a condition of localized practice: The vision of a green snake. And the third, an expression of the continued attempts to inscribe the meaning of Buddhism in terms of textual or material consent: the jewels of *dharma*. These three signs mobilize a review that illuminates continuities in a tradition continually erased and viewed as aberrant and deemed an inversion of or opposition to genuine religion. All three mediate and are attentive to the structures essential to any rupture, any opposition between localized, contextual innovations and textual imaginings. And all three reposition our perception of the meaning of Buddhism in the history of religions in South Africa.¹²

I. Mountains

As opposed to the plain, the site of the mundane or profane in human activity, (but perhaps not, as Paul Wheatley indicated, in opposition to the "ceremonial complex" of the city), the mountain can be seen as an area of

nonactivity and a focus for divinity. A sacred space, a well-structured place, the mountain, demarcated as a cosmic center, can be viewed as definitively typical of the dwelling of divinity. The realm of gods and of the dead, the mountain is a space whose time is also Other, maintained by myth and by the reworking of calendrical and religious ritual. In Japan, for example, Shinto rites reinscribed the mountain not only as an agricultural shrine, but simultaneously as an abode of divinity and a land of the deceased *kami*. In China, Taoists deemed Sung-Shan, "Central Peak," as a spatial map of the belly or a mythological symbol of one of the five fingers of the cosmic Lao Tzu. The mountain was thus an entire cosmos and a metonym of divine physiognomy, rather than merely an allegorical habitation of divinity: it was *axis mundi*. Drawing on these complex relations, Buddhists likewise considered the mountain as an alternate topography, an Other sacred geography. Chinese Buddhists, on account of the enthronement of the First Zen Patriarch upon the mountain peak at Sung-Shan, in a mythic appropriation of this religious symbol, thus interpreted the place as a center of Chan sacrality. As a Pure Land, or indeed, in Chen-Yen and Shingon practice, as a site for the realization of Buddhahood in the sacralized mountain-body and mind of the meditator, another mountain was also favoured by Saicho, the founder of the Japanese Tendai school, who chose Mount Hiei as the arena best suited to test the ability (and agility) of his monks. The history of Japanese and Korean Zen might similarly be narrated: Martin Collcutt, for example, entitled his description of the Rinzai Zen institution in mediaeval Japan, "*Five Mountains*." The history of Korean Son was similarly narrated in accordance with a geography structured around a "*Thousand Peaks*." Not surprisingly, on this periphery of a narrative history of Buddhism, the South African philosopher Laurens van der Post noted that "Buddhism is a religion of high mountains" and the mountain, "transformed

instantly into an image of Buddha's teaching," is a place that should not be "profaned."¹³

The mountain can thus be viewed as a numinous, sacred place invested with the divine and reordered in the flux of time to provide a spatialized topography, an alternate mythology of Buddhist history. As an extended geographical metaphor the mountain has also been an organizing principle and narrative structure that I have continually alluded to and which, I suggest, is itself a text in which to read of a history of interpretations of Buddhism in South Africa. Accordingly, I recall that Francois Valentijn visited the *Dathadhatughara*, the "Temple of the Tooth," on "Adamsberg" in the 1720s, and some fifty years after him James Holman blindly climbed to the summit of the same mountain. However, although both invented a narrative history of Buddhism, begun at the foot of this mountain on which the Buddha, "Sogomom Barcoan," was thought to be buried, both inaugurated an analysis that would continue to privilege internal European perception and colonize Buddhism as an abiding alterity or an enduring self-reflexivity. Consequently, the Buddha, transcribed as text, was made bizarre or Catholic. Rather than illuminating an inquiry about the meaning of this sacred place, Buddhism was integrated into a narrative confirming a European center of signification: Translating unfamiliar Sinhalese geography in accord with Christian hagiography, and drawing on an etymology that, as I suggested, provided the measure of any meaning of Buddhism, the Buddha's berg became Adam's mountain. In the same way Carl Pehr Thunberg argued that the Buddha's *bodhi*-tree was a "duiwel's-boom."

Although Valentijn had also inventoried the *rupa* representing the Buddha that were to be found in temples upon this peak, reporting meticulously the size of this Buddha-body on the mountain so as to inform blind readers of what was unseen, the marvelous minutiae of physique he tabulated to compensate for his own ignorance provided an iconic reference

of Sinhalese Buddhism that although believable was not an accurate account of Buddhism. Structured according to the heuristic strategies of narrative constraint, including symmetry and inversion, Valentijn's epigraphic description produced the "effect of truth" necessary to represent an unseen Other as Other, as merely a moment, for example, of "appalling" Catholic practice. Likewise, the Paarl missionary, Annie Earp, who in 1898 wrote from "Adamsberg," and the Unitarian minister, Ramsden Balmforth, who in 1931 visited the same mountain so as to witness "the Perahera, the festival of the Sacred Tooth," thought Buddhist practice upon the peak an outdated, "mediaeval" superstition and an out of place, unnatural "supernaturalism."¹⁴

In contrast to this opposition, in which Buddhism was thought to be outdated and to reside outside of any classification of religion, as well as outside Africa, Buddhists in South Africa have established an alternate religious geography situated at sacred mountain sites inside Africa ever since Padmasambhava was said to have flown to the continent in the shape of a rainbow. As an event that Allan Grappard alludes to in an analysis of Japanese narratives of flying Buddhas and their mountain abodes, the mythic transport of Padmasambhava, I suggested, provides for a more revealing account of Buddhism than any fanciful European imagination. From the Nan Hau (Africa China) Fo Kuang Shan (Light of the Buddha Mountain) temple in Bronkhorstspuit - a temple denominated by terms that significantly captured the collapse of structured space - to earlier Chinese *shan chue t'oi* ancestral altars and the mounds of Chinese graves symbolically arranged in accordance with *feng shui*; from Tibetan centers of Buddhist sacrality in the Magaliesberg and Sneeuwberg mountains to a Theravadin center in the Natal Drakensberg and a Korean Son *zendo* in the Helderberge; mountain sites pointed to alternative religious topographies that, like earlier nineteenth-century accounts, can be read as texts advancing, through representational strategies of structural opposition, the place of Buddhist practice in South

Africa. Departing from nineteenth-century constraints, however, I employ this geographic map, using a structuralist inquiry, to advance a more adequate account of the meaning of Buddhism.¹⁵

Negotiated by rituals and marked by the establishment of boundaries that momentarily set aside sacred spaces from suburban places, including the removal of shoes inside the *zendo* and the replacement of every-day clothes by robes tied in accordance with formalized patterns of Asian action, sacred mountain sites have transcribed the position of a South African Buddhist practice in the reorganization of an architectural space. By building Buddha *rupas* and the *stupa*, or by painting temples in the distinctive hues of Asian monastic architecture, the ritualized redefinition of sacred place was nonetheless interpreted very differently from earlier travellers' narratives of such sites. The *stupa* in the Drakensberg, for example, was thought to be both symbolic of a microcosm of the universe and, containing relics at its center, interpreted as a structure representing the teachings of the Buddha rather than the idolatry that earlier narrators, drawing on patterns of interpretation premised on European intellectual agendas, suggested. Likewise, the *rupas* overlooking the Drakensberg and Helderberge represented the possibility of opening ones mind's-eye in *akkhi-puja* (literally, eye worship) rather than a structure symbolic of and similar to what Dapper and Tilley, we recall, somewhat fantastically suggested was merely a pattern of Catholic practice, a virgin which was "prayed" to "much in the same manner and for the same purpose" as were "Venus, Diana or Mercury," or as Tachard noted of the "Sommonokhodom" *rupa*, that, like a "god," was "carried up into the air in a throne all shining" with "angels coming down from Heaven."¹⁶

Positioned like a mountain during meditation and *zazen*, when, to extend the metaphor, the sense of frustration for those who reached a certain point in their practice beyond which they could not penetrate was said to

appear as a "silver mountain," the body was also thought by South African Buddhists to be both a mountain and a *rupa* that, far from ascending to heaven, provided an alternate if ambiguous home for the Buddha. By visualizing the imagery of variously-colored Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas* in the mountain-body and mind of the meditator, or invoked by the sound of Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese, or Korean chanting, this mountain space was also reconfigured. As Breyten Breytenbach's poem *sandhabhasa en bodhicitta* (respectively, the "liturgical" visualization of Vajrayana *Bodhisattvas* and the aspiration to develop loving-kindness) suggests, the body was thus both a cosmic Buddhist mountain and a text that inscribed an arena for South African Buddhist practice. Interiorizing Buddha-nature in the sound of *mantra* or the visualization of *mandala*, South Africans structured an alternate sacred space, therefore, wherein the body became the mountain abode of Buddha rather than, as Lowry Oliphant noted in the nineteenth-century, the locus of a monotonous sound, an offensive sight, and an awful stench. Whilst the South African traveller pointed unwittingly perhaps to Buddhist monastic practice in which the body was indeed viewed as a stinking corpse in order that the meditator should become attentive to impermanence, in Tibetan practice, the mind did indeed become detached from the body with the bodies' dismemberment visualized as a form of *dana*. In complex ways, therefore, South African Buddhists viewed the body as an impermanent, dismembered Buddha mountain.¹⁷

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Sacred mountain sites have also been sacralized through bodily movement. However, as Bernard Faure noted, Chan pilgrimage centers in mediaeval Japan and China were often formed from the perigrinations of Buddhist pilgrims travelling to sacred sites where parts of the bodies of Buddhist teachers were miraculously preserved. The cultic center of Sung-Shan, where the First Patriarch was enthroned, and of Ts'oa-ch'i, where the Sixth Patriarch's mummified "flesh-body" was embalmed, were places that

suggest this procedure. From the minutiae of finger *mudra*, (as opposed to Valentijn's ignorant gesticulation illustrated in the insignia of his *onbekende goden*), to the stricture of *kinhin* meditation, the body in transit sets an important parameter for Buddhist practice. Indeed, the entire pursuit of Buddhist practice is often structured around the central metaphor of travel, for it is the *magga* that serves as the most significant metaphor for pilgrims on the path to enlightenment and liberation.

Drawing on a Tantric interpretation in the poem *Lotus*, Breytenbach suggested that movement is also manifest as an interior journey dissolving the frontier between an inner and outer space. In the poem *Voureis*, that interior journey signified the collapse of a cosmic dualism separating the Ganges River and Banares in Buddhist India from the townships of Langa and Nyanga in Africa. Therefore, through Buddhist meditation, it was possible to collapse the nineteenth-century narratives that perpetuated inventions of Asia idiomatic of the monster and entirely dissimilar to Europe or even Africa. However, more recently other forms of pilgrimage expanded the scope of mountainous South African Buddhist places to map out a sort of mandalization of the country in what Allan Grappard called a sacred area rather than only a sacred site.¹⁸

A spatial move aimed at avoiding the boundaries of time and space by "just walking," rituals of pilgrimage were not as prevalent in South African Buddhist practices as they were in Asian, Buddhist states, where rituals were frequently employed to legitimate political power and the prestige of a particular patron. As in China - where the term pilgrimage (*cha'ao-shan chin-hsiang*) implied not so much a journey as "paying one's respect to the mountain" - and in Sri Lanka, where Adamsberg, called Siripada, for a long time formed one of the sixteen mythic places visited by the Buddha, Buddhist pilgrims in South Africa established a *mandala* comprised of a number of mountains inside the country. In contrast to the structure of earlier travels,

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that integrated interpretations of exotic Asian places into a travelogue confirming the authority of a European religious and political center, this alternate sacred geography of Buddhist mountains resisted the totalizing vision of Christian space in South Africa.¹⁹

The journey of a British-born nun, Nara Greenway, provides one example of this South African resistance. Travelling from Ixopo in the Natal Drakensberg, through the Hottentots Holland Mountains to the Cape Helderberge, following much the same route that Occum Chamnam and his fellow shipwrecked Siamese pilgrims traversed two and half centuries earlier, (or indeed the mythic map along which Fugard's fictive character "Christian" Jordaan moved as both castaway and "explorer of the inner space ... of the mind"), her pilgrimage did not perhaps inaugurate a "total onslaught on Christianity." It did represent, however, as David Chidester noted in one of the few published academic comments concerning her journey, yet another challenge to the habitual definition of a religious and political arena in South Africa. Nara Greenway's travels provide once again a chance to redefine the structure and meaning of an implicitly theistic interpretation of religion in South Africa.⁽²⁰⁾

A member of the Nipponzan Myohoji Order, a Nichiren group dedicated to working for world peace, Greenway first came to South Africa in 1985 after hearing the poet Ellen Kuzwayo speak about child detention and the work of the "Save the Children Campaign" at an anti-apartheid meeting in London's Battersea Park, where the Order built a "Peace Pagoda," one of a number of such *stupas* around the world, including Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Returning to South Africa in 1987 in the hope of establishing one such stupa in Alexandra, outside Johannesburg, Greenway undertook a pilgrimage from Durban to Cape Town, where she planned a forty-day vigil and fast, accompanied by a friend and a sympathetic Quaker. The vigil and fast occurred outside the respective religious and political centers of Saint

Mahabharata, for example, reveals that the *naga* was symbolic of the local lethal spirit and, as Jean Phillip Vogel pointed out with reference to archaeological inquiry, was frequently employed in Hindu mythology as an emblem of growth and fertility. In the *Jataka* tales, the stories of the Buddha's former births, Buddhist mythographers stressed that the regional deity, symbolized as a snake, was both a destructive force and a potential protector of the *dharma*. Similarly, in the *Vinayapitaka*, the snake was seen as either friend of the Buddhist *bhikkhu* or as mortal foe responsible for his death. The life of the renowned Soto Zen monk Dogen provides an apt if later illustration: On his way back to Japan, Dogen was saved by a dragon that took the shape of a small white snake. The snake settled in the monk's begging-bowl so that, although thankful for saving his life, Dogen was now tempted by the potentially pernicious power of the snake for his sustenance. However, the local subjugation of the snake is perhaps the most powerful motif of any such symbolism of the *naga* in Buddhist mythology. The oldest example may be the Buddha's conversion of Mahakassapa, whose cave contained a *naga*. But the *Jataka* tales are replete with similar examples. Most frequently, the disruptive power of a local spirit, in the shape of a snake, is pacified by the preaching of the Buddha so that local religious practice is converted to or reinterpreted in an alternate Buddhist idiom.²⁵

Reinforcing the heuristic value of these narratives of conversion, architectural inscriptions on Buddhist *stupas*, including those at Nagarjunakonda and at Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh, represent the *naga* as guardian *par excellence* of the relics of the Buddha. Once subjugated, therefore, the localized religious authority of the snake was considered to become a protector of the jewel of *dharma*. After his enlightenment, moreover, the Buddha was said to have been protected by the *nagaraja* Mucalinda. The *Lalitavistara* embroiders that myth to suggest that Siddhartha Gautama, after travelling to the abode of the *naga* in Sri Lanka, was

George's Anglican Cathedral and the Houses of Parliament on Government Avenue. The "terrific" trip to reach these sacred South African places, however, was marked by continual abuse. An original member of the Vajrayana Buddhist Group that began in Cape Town in 1969, who initially provided a place for the *bhikkhuni* to sleep, recalled how "people drove past shouting out blasphemies ... and the police continually disturbed her."²¹

Although her journey marked out an alternative religious map of Buddhist sacrality, it was the position of her body and the beating of her drum below parliament that appeared to impinge most profoundly on Christian interpretations of space. Parliamentarians, police, and the South African public viewed the nun, dressed in her white and yellow robes and seated next to a small shrine on which was placed a Buddha *rupa*, flowers, and incense, as a spectacle symbolic of an alien infringement on religious and political order. That she slept in the Cathedral and attended morning matins mattered little. In the context of official South African racial classifications, pedestrians questioned whether or not the *bhikkhuni* was "Coloured" or "White." Referring to the religious "sister" as "girl," the police asserted that this non-Asian Buddhist was guilty of disturbing the peace and violating the law and the order of the land. Newspapers reported the inverted, familiar invective of "Born Again," who wrote that "people [not children] were in prison because of lawlessness" and that "girls" like Greenway who "prayed to idols" might be better off imprisoned for accusing legitimate lawmakers of lawlessness. In response, "Born Once," who believed that all people passed "through a series of rebirths," hoped that the respondent would in the course of *samsara* "learn from [these "right-wing"] mistakes" next time around.²²

On another peace pilgrimage, this time covering the 570 kilometers from Durban to Johannesburg, journeying to perhaps the most sacred site of political resistance in South Africa, the place where, in 1976, the children of Soweto resisted apartheid rule, five *bhikkhus* from the Nipponzan Myohoji

Order to which Nara Greenway belonged, once again configured an alternative Buddhist sacred area in South Africa. A week prior to the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994 the monks walked along the same road that Mahatma Gandhi chose eighty years earlier. The choice of this route was premised on the *bhikkhus* belief that "the historical truth and the power of the satyagraha" campaign was present in the possibility for the first time of reconstituting the meaning of peace and order in South Africa. Their pilgrimage, argued the Nipponzan Myohoji monks, would help advance an alternate political space to that inaugurated by apartheid planners. Like the Chinese monk-pilgrim and *Tipitaka* master Hsuan-tsang, whose journey to India provided a perennially powerful symbol serving as an idealized description of Buddhist pilgrimage, the travels of the Nipponzan Myohoji Nichiren monks, "involving great dedication, danger and high adventure," resulted in both invective and applause. While some passers-by accused the pilgrims of satanic practices, the British press, seizing the opportunity to explore what appeared as an anomalous contrast, pictured the monks surrounded by Soweto school children. ⁽²³⁾

Many South Africans travelled outside South Africa to visit Asian Buddhist sites of sacrality. Beginning in the seventeenth century, these travels now include tourist trips to the relic sites of Sri Lanka; to the sites of embalmed Chan Patriarchs in China; to centers of Tibetan Buddhist religious and political power in India; and to Korean centers of Son practice. However, South Africa has also become a sacred site for Buddhist practices of pilgrimage. South Africa has become another center, among a plurality of Buddhist centers, continually reconfigured around mountain sites.

II. Snakes

If mountains provide an alternative map upon which to locate Buddhism and the place of religious practice in South Africa, it is the serpentine allegory of the snake that suggests a local temporality to this variant vision. The mythological snake, or *naga*, represents a profound emblem of a South African interest in Buddhism. By following the snake, we might gain a different perspective on the history of Buddhism in this local context.

Ophidian symbolism, as Balaji Mundkur recently documented in an interdisciplinary survey of the *Cult of the Serpent*, is prominent in the history of religions. Perhaps, as Mary Douglas suggested, because the snake is seen to be "taxonomically anonymous," it is viewed ambiguously, as emblematic of fascination or fear, of "veneration or vicious calumny." In general the indigenous religions of southern Africa have associated the serpent with prosperity and abundance of crops and cattle, or, as Isaac Schapera observed in his account of Kgwanype, the "rain-snake," in the rainmaking rites of Tswana-speaking peoples, with maternity and fertility. However, the serpent was also viewed as an harbinger of sickness, especially when associated with the voice or spirit of the ancestor. For example, the fertility rites of the Sotho and of the Pondo *majola* - the people of the snake - both suggest that the snake was revered and feared. Likewise, among the San, the snake, who was thought to reside between the horns of an eland, was considered propitious during rain-making rites, but symbolically dangerous and polluting, as Vinnecombe noted, during the preparation of poisoned arrows.²⁴

As in African mythologies, the symbol of the snake is well represented in the histories of Asian religions. As with its representation in Africa, an ambiguous role was also apportioned to the serpent. The

encircled by so many snakes that he appeared surrounded by a mass not unlike the mountain Sumeru, the sacred seat of Shiva and, literally, as Lama Anagarika Govinda recalls, the spinal chord or cosmic axis of a Buddhist *mandala*.²⁶

As Bernard Faure proposed, these textual mythologies, setting up a dialogue between Buddhist monks and local deities, often in the form of a snake, not only articulated an alternate religious idiom but also represented an alternate vision of the world. The snake was symbolic of a "confrontation [between] two irreconcilable (and yet coexisting) worldviews: The unlocalized conceptions of Buddhism and the localized beliefs of popular religion in ritual practice." Modifying Jonathan Z. Smith's terminology, the snake thus represented an alternative vision or a variant anthropology of place and time that, rather than "utopian," was intrinsically "locative."²⁷

Thus, the green South African snake I called attention to in Chapter Five might be viewed as a rhetorical device symbolic of an alternate itinerary. That itinerary, unlike Herschel's telescope, that collapsed space, or indeed, unlike the Jesuits' astronomical instruments in Chapter One, that expanded knowledge of the cosmos and generated a distorted vision of the world divided according to that which revolved around a European sacrality and an unintelligible Asian profanity, has the power to restructure and reorganize the space of religious practice in South Africa. Mediating between a "utopian" textual imagining of Buddhism and a more contextually innovative, or "locative" invention, following what Sherry Ortner called the locality of a "cultural scheme," the alternate vision of the serpent also provides, however, an independent voice. The snake both relocates our understanding of the meaning of religion in South Africa and provides another voice in which the meaning of Buddhism can be articulated.²⁸

Whether that locative voice represents a perversion or is necessarily "irreconcilable" to a textual reading of the "truth" of Buddhism is, as I

pointed out, a question of little consequence. That this voice and vision alters an interpretation of the meaning of Buddhism, by offering the possibility of an alternate auditory and ocular modality, is of a more lasting concern. By reconfiguring narrative time, the *naga*, I suggest, provides just one such moment in which, rather than locating Buddhism in terms of any dichotomous logocentrism, its meaning can be negotiated or structured according to the polyvocal messiness of local praxis.

In Part Two I invoked this multivocal expression to suggest the ways in which African space was converted to Buddhist practice. By appropriating a language of Asian mythology in, for example, the name of a farm, Nirodha, the Drakensberg - the serpent mountain - became Buddha's berg. That appropriation is symbolic of the conflict over Siripada in Sri Lanka. Siripada, one of the most important places of Theravadin Buddhist pilgrimage, became Adamsberg. Religious practice at these sites, however, also started to be articulated in a South African "ophidian" idiom. Although Tswana-speaking Africans initiated a discourse concerning the meaning of Buddhism from the beginning of the century at Tiger Kloof, and African participants have recently learned Japanese to become adept at chanting in the Nichiren tradition, African sacred specialists, or sangomas, prompted by the vision and voice of the green, ancestral snake, started a dialogue that now promises to alter the contours of a South African understanding of Buddhism. The recent attempt to translate Buddhist terminology into Xhosa is one example of this contextual, vocal innovation. The opinion that natural African space, devoid of Asian form, is a more accurate interpretation of *pratityasamutpada* and Buddhist impermanence in South Africa is another.

However, the *naga* also provides one lens through which to view not only Buddhism, but religion in different ways. Rather than seeing religion as a spatial and temporally organized structure, South Africans might, in lieu of the serpent's vision, the snake's voice, view religion as essentially empty: As

an alternate voice to that which the South African scholar Julia Martin called the phallogocentric "cock-suredness" of Western subjectivity and substance, the dialectic of Nagarjuna, the Buddhist "snake Person," asserts, for example, that all phenomena (*dharma*) are ontologically empty (*sunyata*) inasmuch as they occur only in mutual dependence (*pratityasamutpada*).²⁹

Similarly, when King Milinda asks the Buddhist monk Nagasena, "What is time?" the *bhikkhu* responds by noting that "time does not exist," that Nirvana, as Steven Collins, drawing on the writings of Frank Kermode asserts, is *kalavimutta* (free from time) and thus the only narrative closure that, unconditioned and time-less, can provide a possible "structure" to any reading of Buddhism or of religion.³⁰

Nonetheless, this vacant space and empty time of *sunyata* is itself a structure open to interpretation. This vacant space and empty time offers a narrative that is imposed upon both by the debris of Western interpretation and, paradoxically, by Buddhist impulses engrossing abstract space with the enshrinement, in *stupas* and *rupas*, of relics and the jewels of *dharma*. Although Buddha-nature has been viewed as essentially empty, therefore, the body has been seen as a *stupa*, a mountain for which the skeleton provides a structure and which is deemed, according to the Japanese Zen master Bassui, to contain the bones, the relics of the Buddha. It is to this vision of the meaning of *Buddhism*, bounded by the structure, the epigraphic jewel of textual consent, that I now turn by considering the recent origin of Buddhism as one of the *religions* of South Africa.³¹

III. Jewels

A history of Buddhism in South Africa might as easily be constructed around the narrative and rhetorical construct of the jewel, a dissonant *Diamond*

Sutra, as it has been according to the geography of the mountain, or the temporality of serpentine mythology and the vision of a green snake. Ever since Siamese Theravadin monks attempted to exchange diamonds for food with the Cape Khoi and with Dutch farmers in the seventeenth century, the jewel, like the crystal embedded by Theosophists in the Drakensberg and alluded to in the travelogue of the Tibetan teacher, Ole Nydahl, reflected moments of a South African encounter with Buddhism. Whether a relic of travels to Asian sites, to the *dathadhatughara* Temple of the Tooth or the toes of the Buddha footprint, or of Tibetan Buddhas flying to southern Africa to bury the jewels of *dharma* in local mountains, the jewel confirmed the presence of Buddhist practice in this place. Although crystals and Buddhist mirabilia were positioned in South African *stupas* and *rupas*, and, in a memorable passage from Fugard, sea-shell relics on the Eastern Cape coastline were remade into Buddhist mandalas and into an hundred and eight jewel "prayer-necklace," the textuality of the jewel of *dharma* provided the most powerful and significant meaning of this metaphor.³²

Thus I recalled how Occam Chamnum saw his ambassador hold the *suttas* he carried at a high point, over the heads of his party, and plead that any survivor inter the jewel of texts in a high mountain place and "prostrate himself ... testifying by his death, the respect which he bore it while alive." More often, however, the text was seized upon as a standard according to which the truth of Buddhist practice might be measured. The nineteenth-century beginnings of Buddhology, as I suggested, were a testament to this tradition. For Orientalists and Indologists, the structure of Buddhist *suttas* provided almost the sole criteria against which to rule and regulate the "errancy" or "truth" of Buddhist practice.³³

For most South African Buddhists, however, this textual standard appeared an anomaly, with the authority of Buddhism rehearsed in the context of local practice or revealed in agreement with visiting teachers,

rather than in an application to textual authority. Ironically, therefore, it was the Buddhist *sutta*, the jewel of the *dharma*, that legally conditioned a South African acceptance of Buddhism as a religion. The acid test of that inaugural agreement occurred when a Buddhist pacifist, David Andrew Hartman, appeared before the Board for Religious Objection in November 1984. Hartman argued, for the first time on the grounds of Buddhist belief, that South Africans should be granted a six-year term of community service as an alternative to military conscription, an alternative to which all pacifist religious objectors were entitled. The case would be an important one, noted one reporter, insofar as it would effect many subsequent Buddhists whom, the reporter assumed, would be primarily Indian or Coloured conscripts. But since the Board was called upon to consider whether Buddhism was a religion, the consequence of this legal interpretation was significantly more momentous than merely the "holy problem" that "Buddhist Dave set the Defence Force."³⁴

Hartman had at school participated in the Students' Christian Association, but as a postgraduate student at Rhodes University he became interested in Buddhism, an interest that developed after visiting, in May 1984, the Nieu Bethesda Samye Ling center in the Karoo Sneeuwberg. At that time he attended a retreat conducted by the Theravadin teacher Ayya Khema. Her teachings consisted of breathing-meditation techniques and an introduction to the Theravadin *suttas*, including a translation of the Pali collection called the *Anguttara-Nikaya*. Hartman was most impressed, however, by Ayya Khema's dedication to nonviolence and compassion that, he felt, was consistent with his commitment to a pacifist lifestyle. One Board member, an Anglican Chaplain, J. M. Daines, however, wondered why in Grahamstown, "the city of the saints" and of "Saint Paul's," Hartman did not, instead of becoming a committed Buddhist, contact the sisters of the

Community of the Resurrection, "who also spend their time in retreats, in meditation and prayer and helping others."³⁵

In support of Hartman's application, Ayya Khema contended that there was little distinction between Buddhist compassion and Christian commitment, even though an expert witness, Jan H. Hofmeyr, pointed out that, unlike Christian concern, Buddhist compassion was based on detachment "because it was only when truly detached that self-interest" did not occur. However, the possibility that Buddhism should not be regarded as a *religion*, let alone as an expression of Christian concern, was considered by the Board. In terms of the perimeters set by the Defence Act 44 of 1957 s72, as amended in 1983, the notion of religion and religious conviction appeared to exclude Buddhism, since "religion" was translated by the term "godsdienst" and "religious conviction" by "godsdienstige oortuiging." Although he insisted that Buddhism was a "religious way of life" and not just an "intellectual philosophy," Hartman identified himself as an agnostic. As a Buddhist, he was "unsure of the existence of a god or gods." Since Buddhism was not theistic, the Board argued that it could not be considered a religion. According to the Act, as Chairman of the Board Judge Steyn argued, religion presupposed belief in a Supreme Being or Beings of a divine nature. Since Hartman was not a member of any religious "kerkgenootskap (church community)" or denomination, "like a Buddhist Nederduitse Gereformeerde Church or a Buddhist Methodist Church or a Buddhist Anglican Church," noted the Chairman, by the very "clarity of his exposition and of his acknowledgment of the fact that he does not believe in a Supreme Being or divine nature," he "made it impossible for himself to prove what the Act required." Although he might have been a Buddhist, Hartman was not religious since Buddhism was not a religion.³⁶

As nineteenth-century travellers had done earlier, therefore, the Board premised its interpretation of religion on traditional forms and structures of

Western theism. By privileging these patterns of analysis in both its definition of religion and in its theistic terminology, the Board perpetuated the denial of Buddhism so as to erase the "problem" posed by its apparent Otherness. Transposing their own ignorance onto this Buddhist Other, the Board argued, therefore, that the words "recognized religious denomination" were "unintelligible unless they be understood to refer to a theistic religion." However, the Board did not only base its findings on a preference for Western theistic terminology. The analytical resources it employed suggested also that the textual authority advanced much earlier to control Buddhist practice was once again used to measure current inquiry.

Thus the Defence Act was considered to be the final authority in defining religion. In fact, noted Judge Steyn, the Defence Act itself became a sacred text: The Defence Act was a religious "canon." Drawing on the nineteenth-century texts of European Buddhologists, however, Judge Steyn instructed that these Western works would also set the perimeters for what counted as Buddhism. Picking up the tradition of European textual invention, the Chairman of the Board, as both witness, judge, and expert, recounted how Mahayana Buddhism might conceivably be thought of as a theistic religion. In this sense, reversing the inclination of nineteenth-century scholarship, which viewed Theravada Buddhism as the most "original" and "pure" form of Buddhism, the judge, on the basis of European textual inventions, deemed Mahayana Buddhism to be consistent with a morphology of religion, whereas Theravadin Buddhism, which held no belief in "high gods," was not. Drawing on Fyodore Stcherbatsky's "authority," the judge pointed out that while Mahayana Buddhism was similar to "a magnificent High Church with a Supreme God, surrounded by a numerous pantheon, and a host of Saints, a religion highly devotional," Theravada Buddhism, under the tenets of which Hartman had originally appealed, had no such "highly ceremonial and clerical" character. As such, Theravada Buddhism could not

claim to be a religion. While Mahayana Buddhism was a religion, therefore, Judge Steyn ruled on the basis of a South African constitutional "canon" and the archive of Western interpretation, that Theravada Buddhism was not.³⁷

Another expert witness on Buddhism, Jacobus Hendrik Smit, who was at that time a professor of missiology in the faculty of theology at the University of the Orange Free State, argued that Judge Steyn's interpretation was erroneous. First, Theravada Buddhism, not Mahayana Buddhism, was the more "orthodox" school. Second, and more importantly, however, Theravada Buddhism, although non-theistic, was as likely to be considered a "godsdiens (service to god)" as was Mahayana Buddhism, since "to exercise religion and not only have a philosophy" one needed only "a source of reference outside yourself." In the case of a non-theistic tradition, like Theravada Buddhism, "the Pali Canon is your source of reference," asserted the theologian. The text of the Pali *Tipitaka* thus provided the proof that Buddhism was a religion.³⁸

In a strange recurrence of nineteenth-century episodes, the Pali texts that Hartman referred to in his appeal, including sections from the *Dhammapada*, were once again used as "exhibits" in order to provide proof that Buddhism was a religion. Apparently, commitment and practice were irrelevant concerns. In an odd way, but in a way that might not be unexpected, however, the texts indexed as material artifacts were also personified: Judge Steyn, as the state's jurist, and now Buddhist expert, wanted to know "who was this *Dhammapada*?" Apparently, it was the answer to that question that would either confirm or deny Hartman's assertion that Buddhism was a South African religion.³⁹

Two years later, in August 1986, both David Hartman and Judge Steyn were offered a reply to that question: Judges Smuts, Van Coller, and Malherbe of the Supreme Court, to whom the case was referred, ruled that the *Dhammapada* was not a person but a collection of sayings that formed

part of the second book of the *Khuddaka-Nikaya*, itself part of the Pali *Tipitaka*. "As the Canon of the Theravadins," moreover, the *Dhammapada* was a *religious* book. Since he had furnished the court with these textual exhibits, a display which "fulfilled the requirements in s72B(2)(d) that an applicant be able to show the books of revelation and articles of faith upon which his religious convictions" were based, Hartman was deemed a *religious* Buddhist. For the first time since Siamese Theravadin monks set foot in South Africa almost exactly two centuries earlier, in 1686, Buddhism was, consequently, also thought to be a South African religion. Having reshaped what it might mean to be Buddhist, therefore, Buddhists reconvened an alternate way in which South Africa would now have to view religion.

Appendices

Appendix One *A Chronology of Buddhism in South Africa*

1668 Engraver and bogus physician Olfert Dapper publishes the *Naukerige Beschryvinge*. Two years later his watershed volume *Der Nederlandsche Oost-indische Maetschappye, op de Kust en in het Keizzerijk van Taising of China* is printed.

1685 Or Pavisu Ta, a Buddhist nobleman of Portuguese extract, who represented the King of Siam in Europe, arrives in Cape Town.

1686 The *Nossa Senora dos Milagros* founders off the Cape Agulhas coast, leaving ten Siamese Buddhists stranded in Cape Town, among them Kosa Pal Phra Khlang and Occam Chamnam.

1688 Occam Chamnam returns to the Cape after visiting the courts of Portugal and France.

1688 The French Catholic missionary Gui Tachard publishes his *Relation of the Voyage to Siam*.

1691 William Dampier arrives in Cape Town and attempts to exchange a "painted Asian prince" for Cape Khoi.

1695 Francois Valentijn describes the Buddhist art collections of Stellenbosch colonists Johannes Muller, Adrian van Brakel, and Engela Breda. Thirty years later Valentijn publishes a description of Asian and African religions, including Buddhism, in his *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien*.

1775 Cape Botanist Carl Pehr Thunberg arrives in Japan.

1782 Two Cape slaves, Spadilje and Ontong of Siam, are arrested in Stellenbosch for theft.

1804 John Barrow first publishes an account of the Cape Governor the Earl of Macartney's mission to China.

1829 The first English-language book with the word "Buddhism" in its title is published by Edward Upman. The South African Library acquires Upman's *History and Doctrine of Buddhism* thirteen years later.

1830 James Holman arrives in Mauritius and meets a Sinhalese Buddhist priest who claims powers to restore the blind traveller's sight.

1856 Charles Gützlaff argues for the African origins of the Buddha. A century later J. P. Bruwer reasserts the argument in a paper for the Suid-Afrikaanse Buro vir Rase-Aangeleentede.

1859 South African diplomat Sir Lowry Oliphant arrives in Japan.

1860 Indian indentured immigrants arrive in Natal, among them Rajaram Dass.

1861 Sir George Grey donates two Buddhist manuscripts to the South African Library. The first an unidentified Siamese "*sutta*," and the second a Burmese *upasampada* formulary describing the *kathina* ceremony.

1865 South African diplomat Sir Lowry Oliphant, and his mother, Lady Oliphant, join Thomas Lake Harris in New York to pursue spiritual interests in Buddhist breathing and meditation techniques.

1867 Cape Unitarian minister David Pieter Faure cites the example of Buddhism to illustrate reasons for the decline of Christianity in South Africa.

In 1882 Faure publishes a collection of sermons entitled *Reasonable Religion* wherein he lauds the reformist teachings of the Buddha.

1870 Bishop of Kaffraria, Henry Callaway, is convinced that Siamese Buddhists are "superstitious." They do not represent "the real doctrines of genuine Buddhism."

1871 *De Algemeen Christelijk Maandblad* reviews F. Max Müller's *The Buddhist Nirvana* and, four years later, his Hibbert lectures, *The Science of Religion*.

1874 A review of F. Max Müller's essay on Buddhist missions is published in Xhosa in the Eastern Cape journal the *Kaffir Express*. The reviewer notes that Buddhism was a complimentary counterpart in the East of Protestantism in the West.

1880 Cape Unitarian minister Ramsden Balmforth writes a tract entitled *Liberal Religion* in which he asserts that in "Buddhism, in Hinduism, in Parseeism, and in Shintooism," there exists a spark of Ultimate truth.

1880 James Gill, the Diocesan College professor of classics in Cape Town, publishes his review of William "Oriental" Jones' contribution to Sanskrit studies in the *Cape Monthly Magazine*.

1886 "T. D. P." publishes a comparison of Buddhist and Christian belief and practice for the South African journal *The Christian Express*.

1891 Arnold Hurst Watkins publishes the first article on Buddhism by a South African writer in the *Cape Illustrated Magazine*. In 1906 his novel *From Farm to Forum, or Young Africa* continues the theme of Buddhist influences in South Africa.

1898 Annie Earp, who trained at the Huguenot Missionary Seminary in Paarl, writes from Sri Lanka of her work among "diligent Buddhists" on the island.

1898 The South African Museum in Cape Town receives its first donation of Buddhist artifacts. Included in the donation are two Indian Buddha *rupas*.

1899 Olive Schreiner writes the *Buddhist Priest's Wife* in Matjiesfontein.

1903 South African Theosophist E. Douglas Fawcett asserts that "nothing is more impressive" than the Buddhist teaching that "Nirvana attainable by the ego."

1904 South African Anglo-Boer war prisoner J. N. Brink devotes six chapters of his wartime memoirs to a discussion of Sinhalese Buddhism.

1904 The first Chinese indentured laborers arrive in the Transvaal.

1910 At a Bechuanaland Protectorate mission school called Tiger Kloof, William Charles Willoughby instructs a class of Tswana-speaking Christians in the comparative study of Christianity, "Bantu religion," and "non-Christian religions," among them Buddhism. Maphakalela Lekakaka and Roger K. Mokodi noted that some classes were confined to the study of Buddhism.

1911 South African Missionary James McKay concludes that San cave paintings in the Cape reflect a prior Asian Buddhist influence.

1911 The first South Africa census returns to signal a Buddhist presence in the country are published. Four hundred and thirty-six Buddhists are enumerated.

1917 The Overport Buddhist Sakya Society is established in Durban.

1927 A Theravadin Buddhist *vihara* is built in Tanzania by Sri Lankan immigrants.

1944 D. J. Mackin publishes his article on Buddhism in the African Bookman's *Religion in Many Lands* series.

1949 Afrikaans poet C. Louis Leipoldt publicly registers his conversion to Buddhism.

1956 The Buddha Jayanti is celebrated in South Africa by the Natal Buddhist Society and the Cape Town Navjivan Dharmic Semelen.

1959 Kalman Papp writes the first entry on Buddhism in the *Standard Encyclopaedia for Southern Africa*.

1969 A Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana group is formed in Cape Town by Karma Chopel. The "Mahayana Buddhist group of the Kagyudpa Realization in Cape Town" advertises in the British Buddhist journal, *Middle Way*.

1969 The Tibetan Friendship Group in South Africa is founded by the South African Theosophist Dolma Chunzom and the Tibetan Buddhist gelongma Karma Tsultim Khechog Palmo.

1970 Census returns indicate that 1 407 Black "African Buddhists" live in South Africa.

1970 Louis and Molly van Loon publish *The Indian Buddhist Community in South Africa: Its Historical Origins and Socio-Religious Attitudes and Practices*.

1970 The site for a Buddhist retreat center to be established along Theravadin lines is consecrated at Ixopo in the Natal Drakensberg.

1972 Karma Tsultim Khechog Palmo arrives in South Africa. Karma Rigdor. Buddhist groups are formed in Port Elizabeth, East London, Durban, Cape Town, and Johannesburg.

1972 Sheila Fugard publishes *The Castaways*, a fictional account of the torture of a shipwrecked Buddhist convert in South Africa. Reviewers suggest that the time was not ripe for the appearance of Buddhists in South Africa.

1975 Afrikaans poet Breyten Breytenbach is imprisoned for treason in the Pretoria Maximum Security prison. He practices *zazen* and five years later publishes *A Season in Paradise*. An essay entitle "Zen in the Way of Being a Prisoner, or Pi K'uan" recalls his experiences.

1975 D. H. Steenberg publishes an article on Zen Buddhism for the *Instituut vir die Bevordering van Calvinisme*, at the University of Potchefstroom.

1975 Karma Chimey Dolka establishes a meditation retreat and *gompa* in the Magaliesberg foothills near Johannesburg.

1978 A local chapter of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship is established in South Africa by Karma Samten Phuntsok.

1978 Lama Ole Nyadhl arrives in South Africa and initiates two Johannesburg woman sangomas into the lineage of Kagyudpa Tibetan Buddhism.

1979 A Zen center affiliated to the *Mission de Maitre Taisen Deshimaru* is established in Johannesburg by the Soto Zen teacher Venerable Taicho Kyogen. The Dojo Marisan Nariji holds annual *rohatsu* weekends at a retreat center in the Eastern Transvaal.

1979 Lama Anagarika Govinda, founder of the Arya Maitreya Mandala opens Molly van Loon's Buddhist art exhibition in Pretoria.

1980 The Buddhist Institute of South Africa is constituted. Under the auspices of the Institute, the Buddhist Retreat Center at Ixopo is formally inaugurated.

1981 A Pretoria Buddhist group is formed along Theravadin lines.

1981 Rob Nairn, at one time a professor of criminology at the University of Cape Town, establishes a Tibetan Buddhist retreat center in the Karoo town of Nieu Bethesda called Kagyudpa Samye Ling. Venerable Chuje Akong Rimpoche is nominated as a guiding teacher.

1982 A Buddhist center is established below the Cape Helderberg mountains near Somerset West. Founders Heila and Rodney Downey register the center as an ecclesiastical organization in 1985. In 1989 the Dharma Center in Somerset West becomes an affiliate of the Korean Kwan Um School of Chogye Son (Zen). In that year the founding Master of the school, Master Seung Sahn, visits South Africa.

1983 A South African chapter of Soka Gakkai International is first formed. Groups emerge in Cape Town, Durban, and Johannesburg.

1983 The first South African Buddhist *stupa* is built at Ixopo.

1984 A retreat for Roman Catholic nuns is held at the Buddhist Retreat Center. Sister Margaret recalls that doing *zazen* "had totally transformed us."

1986 After two years of deliberation, the Supreme Court rules that Buddhism is a religion. Conscientious objector David Hartman, who first appeared before the Board for Religious Objection to argue that point in 1984, escapes a jail sentence.

1987 A Nipponzan Myohoji nun, Nara Greenway, returns to South Africa to undertake a peace pilgrimage. Sympathetic Quakers join her in a vigil and fast outside Saint George's Cathedral, Cape Town.

1988 A. J. van Staden's articles on Buddhism first appear in *De Hervormde*, the official organ of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk.

1988 Professor Jacobus S. Krüger publishes the first translation in Afrikaans of a Buddhist sutra, the Pali *Satipatthana Sutta*.

1988 Rob Nairn leaves for a four year retreat at the Samye Ling Buddhist temple in Scotland.

1988 South African Buddhist Dimitri Furneaux takes monastic precepts at the Theravadin Buddhist Chithurst Forest monastery in England.

1990 Alison Smith establishes a Theravadin-based Buddhist group in Cape Town.

1991 Korean Kwun Um Schools of Chogye Son (Zen) are formed in Grahamstown and Colesburg.

1991 Sepp Anthofer, Oblate of Mary Immaculate, initiates a Zen meditation center overlooking the Hartbeespoort Dam near Pretoria.

1992 A chapter of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order is formed in Johannesburg.

1992 A Gelugpa Tibetan Buddhist order is established in Johannesburg. Lama Geshe Damcho arrives in 1994 to act as resident and guiding teacher.

1992 Ani Sangje Choden takes monastic precepts whilst at Samye Ling temple in Scotland and returns to South Africa to live the life of a Buddhist nun.

1992 Nan Hau (Africa China) temple is consecrated in the Transvaal town of Bronkhorstspuit. The temple, funded by Fo Kuang Shan Buddhists in South Africa and the Republic of Taiwan is projected to become the largest Buddhist temple in the southern Hemisphere.

1993 Helga Kerschbaum begins a group for Zen practitioners in Cape Town. Weekly *sesshins* are conducted according to the techniques of the Sanbo Kyodan school.

1993 Rob Nairn publishes *Tranquil Mind*, an introduction to Buddhist meditation. Two years later Nairn's book is ready for publication in Xhosa.

1993 South Africa archaeologist Cyril Hromnick suggests that San rock art contains evidence of an earlier Asian religious influence.

1994 Gavin Harrison publishes an account of his struggle with the AIDS virus in *In the Lap of the Buddha*.

1994 Master Hsing Yun, founding Master of the Fo Kuang Shan Buddhist order and of the Buddhist International Light Association travels to South Africa from the Republic of Taiwan.

1994 Nipponzan Myohji monks walk from Phoenix in Durban to Soweto prior to the first democratic elections in South Africa.

1994 Ten Congolese Buddhist converts receive monastic precepts and training at Nan Hau temple, Bronkhorstspuit.

Appendix Two

Abridged Analysis of Census Statistics Documenting a History of Buddhists in South Africa

	<i>1911</i>	<i>1918</i>	<i>1921</i>	<i>1926</i>	<i>1936</i>	<i>1946</i>	<i>1951</i>	<i>1970</i>	<i>1991</i>
Total	436	-	12512	-	1785	429	585	2253	2391
Males	328	-	7280	-	998	221	336	1120	1331
Females	108	-	5232	-	787	208	249	1133	1060
Europeans	42	9	25 ^{21 male 4 female}	12	13	17	46	200	1097
Asians	394	-	12487	-	1772	412	539	646	754
Africans	0	-	0	-	0	0	0	1407	540
Cape	48	1	322	7	65	26	26	-	-
Transvaal	174	4	742	4	72	127	105	-	-
Natal	209	4	11444	1	1648	276	454	-	-
OFS	5	0	4	0	0	0	0	-	-

Notes

Notes to the Preface

1. Jacobus S. Krüger, *Buddhism from the Buddha to Asoka: Circumstances, Events, Practices, Teachings* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1991), p. 76.
2. See James A. Boon, "Introduction to the English Edition" in Michel Izard and Pierre Smith (eds.), *Between Belief and Transgression: Structuralist Essays in Religion, History and Myth*, translated by John Leavitt (Original edition, 1979), this edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. v. Exceptions to the histories of Lethean amnesia and selective aphasia in a South African academic interest in Buddhism are reflected primarily in the works of Jacobus Krüger and Michel Clasquin, both of the Department of the Science of Religion at the University of South Africa, and of Felicity Souter Edwards of the Department of Divinity at Rhodes University. See the important contributions to Buddhology made by Jacobus S. Krüger in *Aandag, kalmte en insig: 'n uiteensetting van Theravada Boeddhistiese meditasie aan die hand van die (Maha-) Satipatthana Sutta* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1988) and *Metatheism: Early Buddhism and Traditional Christian Theism (A reading of the Tevijja Sutta)* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1989). Also, Krüger's recent introduction to early Buddhism in *Buddhism from the Buddha to Asoka: Circumstances, Events, Practices, Teachings* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1991). And Jacobus S. Krüger, "Die Wortel van alle Dinge: Die Vroeg-Boeddhistiese Siening van die Bestand van die Werklikheid aan die Hand van die Mulapariyaya-Sutta," *Theologica Evangelica*, vol 25, no. 2, (1992), pp. 64-76. Articles by Michel Clasquin include, among others, "Paradoxical Intention and Zen: New Light on an Old Technique," *Journal for the Study of Religion*, vol 2, no. 2, (1989), pp. 49-58; "Contemporary Theravada and Zen Buddhist Attitudes to Human Sexuality: An Exercise in Comparative Ethics," *Religion*, vol 22, (1992), pp. 63-83; "Buddhism and Unemployment: A Conceptual Reappraisal of Social Classification Systems," in W. S. Vorster (ed.), *On Being Unemployed and Religious, Papers Presented at the 16th Symposium of the Institute for Theological Research* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 1992), pp. 96-105; and "Why Study Buddhism?" *Theologica Evangelica*, vol 25, no. 2, (1992), pp. 58-63. Clasquin recently completed "Early Buddhist Interpersonal Ethics: A Study of the Singalovada Suttanta and its Contemporary Relevance," M. A. thesis, University of South Africa, 1993. Felicity Souter Edwards has written on moments

in a Christian-Buddhist dialogue in "Vipassana Meditation and Transcultural Consciousness," *Journal for the Study of Religion* vol 1, no. 2, (1988), pp. 37-51. The only attempt to address the particular contours of a South African interpretation of Buddhism occurs in a watershed 1979 research paper by Louis and Molly van Loon, *The Indian Buddhist Community in South Africa: Its Historical Origins and Socio-Religious Attitudes and Practices*, published in an abridged version in *Religion in Southern Africa*, vol 1, no. 2, (1980), pp. 3-18. The absence of South African historical documentation appears in stark contrast to an expanding body of literature on non-Asian encounters with Buddhism in Britain, North America, Australia, and even parts of Africa. For accounts of Buddhism in Britain see Ian P. Oliver, *Buddhism in Britain* (London: Rider, 1979). Also, more recently, Philip C. Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), and Lance S. Cousins, "Theravada Buddhism in Britain," Unpublished paper presented at the First International Conference on Buddhism into the Year 2000, Dhammakaya Foundation, Bangkok, Thailand, 1994. More generally, there is a useful discussion of the influence of Orientalists and the textual analysis of Asian religions in Britain by Terence Thomas. See Terence Thomas, *The British: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices, 1800-1986* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988). Stephen Batchelor's work on Buddhism in Europe is perhaps the most recent contribution to this genre. See Stephen Batchelor, *The Awakening of the West: The Encounter of Buddhism and Western Culture* (London: Aquarian, 1994). For accounts of Buddhism in the United States of America see, for example, Charles S. Prebish, *American Buddhism* (North Scituate, Massachusetts: Duxbury Press, 1979). An extensively annotated narrative of Buddhism in America exists in Rick Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative of Buddhism in America* (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1981). A more analytical document of American continuities with Buddhist thought in nineteenth-century Theosophical, Romantic, and Unitarian thinking appears in Thomas A. Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844-1912* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992). For a similar account of Buddhism in Australia see Paul Croucher, *Buddhism in Australia, 1848-1988* (New South Wales: New South Wales University Press, 1989). The history of Buddhism in Africa remains largely undocumented. Brief notes, however, appear in Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Also containing remarks on Buddhism in Africa are editions of *The World Fellowship of Buddhists Review*, vol 21, no. 1, (1984), p. 76 (Tanzania and Zambia); vol 23, no. 1, (1986), pp. 31-2 (Tanzania); vol 23, no. 4, (1986), p. 78 (Zaire); and vol 24, no. 1, (1987), p. 32 (Zambia). The British Buddhist journal *Middle Way* also contains notes on Buddhism in Africa. See vol 59, no. 1, (1984), p. 66 (Ghana, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Uganda); and vol 61, no. 4, (1987), p. 283 (Zaire). These notes suggest that the appeal of Buddhism in Africa, which led to the building in 1927 of a Buddhist monastery in Tanzania by Sri Lankan immigrant laborers, has received renewed support from the Maha Bodhi Society (in Zaire, Ghana, and Zambia) and from Nichiren Shoshu (in the Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Uganda, and Ghana, where 1 715 members received the Object of Worship teachings in 1983).

3. Kalman Papp, "Buddhism" in D. J. Potgieter et. al. (eds.), *Standard Encyclopaedia for Southern Africa* (Cape Town: Nasionale Opvoedkundige Uitgewery, 1971), vol 2, p. 550. Also Kalman Papp, *Vreemde Godsdienste Binne ons Landsgrense* (Johannesburg: Suid-Afrikaanse Uitsaaikorporasie, 1959). An edition of the last-named volume was published for the blind by Brailledienste (Johannesburg, 1962).
4. Hendrik Daniel Alphonse du Toit, *Vyf Godsdienste van die Wereld, Boeke by die Bybel Reeks: Afdeling 2: Sendings* (Pretoria: N.G. Boekhandel, 1970).
5. D. H. Steenberg, *Zen-Boeddhisme* (Potchefstroom: Instituut vir die Bevordering van Calvinisme, Studiestuk nr. 91, Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoer Onderwys, 1979).
6. A. J. Van Staden, "Die Boeddhisme: Die Christen en die Boeddhis," *De Hervormde*, vol 80, no. 9, (1988), p. 11. See also vol 79, no. 10, (1988), p. 10; vol 79, no. 11, (1988), p. 9; vol 79, no. 12, (1988), p. 7; vol 80, no. 2, (1988), p. 12; vol 80, no. 3, (1988), p. 11; vol 80, no. 4, (1988), p. 11; vol 80, no. 5, (1988), p. 10; vol 80, no. 6, (1988), pp. 12-13.
7. Jannie du Preez, "A Buddhist Form of Salvation by Grace Alone? An Extract from a Twentieth Century Discussion Regarding Salvation by Grace Alone in Buddhist Jodo Shinshu," *Missionalia*, vol 21, no. 2, (1993), pp. 176-85.
8. See E. M. McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian* (London: Trubner and Co., 1877).
9. For Clement of Alexandria's comments see Guy R. Welbon, *The Buddhist Nirvana and its Western Interpreters* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1968), p. 5. Origen's assertions are cited in Donald A. Mackenzie, *Buddhism in Pre-Christian Britain* (Oxford: Blackie and Sons, 1928), p. v.
10. J. Kennedy, "Buddhist Gnosticism, the System of Basilides," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol 34, (1902), pp. 66-79.
11. On Buddhism as missiological threat, indeed, as a threat to "Western Culture," see, for example, Izak Cornelius Potgieter, "'n Teologies-Kritiese Oorsig oor die Verhouding Tussen Zen-Boeddhisme en die Selfverdedigingskunste," M. Th. thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1979. On Buddhism as a "romantic" or "idealist" deviation see Charis Perkins, "Catholic Priest has Yen for Zen," *Sunday Times*, April 5, 1992, p. 17. Also Anthony Stidolph, "How Buddha Came to the Berg," *Style Magazine*, March 1990, pp. 132-35; Bruce Cohen, "Discover Buddha in the Bush," *Weekly Mail*, March 15-21, 1991; and M. Parsons, "Buddhist Retreat Center: Place of Quit," *Prisma*, vol 7, no. 6, (1992), pp. 6-7. On Buddhism as a popular demonism see Shaun de Waal, "Beware the Buddha on your Mantelpiece," (Review of *Satanism: The Seduction of South Africa's Youth*, by John and Helen Gardiner), *Weekly Mail*, June 28 - July 4, 1991, p. 28. For a recent account of Buddhism as a popular, romantic repertoire in travel writings see, for example, Michael Orchard and Sybille Nagel, "Overland in Tibet," *House and Leisure*, April 1995, pp. 112-17.
12. Gerry and Stephen Callaghan, "Nirvana in the Karoo," *Rand Daily Mail*, Eve, February 22, 1985, p. 2. And Phoebe Lange, "Karoo Town Humming to Buddhist Chants," *Eastern Province Herald*, January 9, 1987. Also Katrin Auf der Heyde,

"The Buddhist Impact on Nieu Bethesda," B. A. (Hons.) thesis, University of Cape Town, 1986, p. 76.

13. For a more detailed description of the census returns see appendix two.

14. For South African census reports that document the history of Buddhism see *Census of the Union of South Africa, 1911, Part VI - "Religions of the People"* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1911); *Census of the Union of South Africa, 1918, Part VI - "Religions of the People, Europeans or White Races Only"* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1918); *Census of the European Population, 1921, Part VI - "Religions of the People"* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1921); *Census of the European Population, 1926, Part VIII - "Religions of the People"* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1926); *Census of the Population of the Union of South Africa, 1936, Part VI - "Religions of the European, Asiatic and Coloured Population"* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1936); *Census of the Republic of South Africa, 1951, Part III - "Religions of the White Population" - and Part VII - "Marital Status, Religions and Birthplaces of Coloureds, Asiatics and Natives"* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1951); *Population Census, 1970, "Religion," Report no. 02-05-03* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1970); and *Population Census, 1991 - "Summarised Results before Adjustment for Undercount," no. 03-01-00* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1992). For a discussion of the history of panopticism see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979). For a useful introduction to Foucault's thought on the archaeology of panoptical or conformist forces see Martin Jay, "In the Empire of the Gaze: Foucault and the Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-century French Thought," in David Couzins Hoy (ed.), *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 175-204. It is noteworthy that the first census to document Buddhists in South Africa specifically, (instead of consuming Buddhists within a taxonomy of "Other Non-Christian" or "Heathen" religions), arose simultaneously with the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910.

15. Mircea Eliade, *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 54-71, especially p. 69. Also Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. xii-xiii. For a discussion of attempts to collapse the dualism of Self and Other see Gayatri C. Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Methuen, 1987). For an exemplary reflection of this process in Asia see Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992). For alterity in ethnography generally see James A. Boon, *Other Tribes Other Scribes: Symbolic Anthropology in the Comparative Study of Cultures, Histories, Religions and Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

16. On the "surreal" in ethnography see James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Surrealism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol 23, (1981), pp. 539-64. Also Bernard S. Cohn, "Anthropology and History in the 1980s," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol 12, no. 2, (1981), especially pp. 232-33, where the writer reviews the rendering of social disorder in the regulation of text. On the visual in ethnographic representation see Martin Jay, "In the Empire of the Gaze," in David Couzins Hoy (ed.), *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell,

- 1986). Also Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, translated by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).
17. Gregory Schopen, "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism," *History of Religions*, vol 31, no. 1, (1991), pp. 1-23.
18. Peter Harrison, *Religion and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
19. E. L., "When money becomes more important than faithfulness," *Bronkhorstspuit Nuus*, 22 May, 1992.
20. For an account of Zen in South Africa see Stephen Batchelor, "No Man's Land: A Letter From South Africa," *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, vol 14, no. 4, (1993), p. 65.
21. See Richard F. Gombrich, *Precept and Practice: Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971). On "locative" and "utopian" worldviews see Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map is not Territory* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978). Bernard Faure explores the concept in relation to the contextual localities of the Chan tradition, from which the example of the snake or naga is drawn. See Bernard Faure, "Space and Place in Chinese Religious Traditions," *History of Religions*, vol 26, no. 4, (1987), pp. 337-34.
22. Mircea Eliade, *The Quest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 57. On Orientalism see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (Original edition, 1978), this edition (London: Penguin, 1991). Also Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880* (Original edition, 1950), this edition translated by G. Patterson-Black and V. Reinking (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984).
23. Stephen Batchelor, in his history of Buddhism in Europe, notably concludes with a postscript on the South African Buddhist Retreat Center at Ixopo. See Stephen Batchelor, *The Awakening of the West: The Encounter of Buddhism and Western Culture* (London: Aquarian, 1994), pp. 378-79.

Notes to Part One

1. For a reevaluation of early travel literature based on naive receptivity to human difference see James A. Boon, "Comparative De-enlightenment: Paradox and Limits in the History of Ethnography," *Daedalus*, vol 109, no. 2, (1980), pp. 73 ff. Also Mary B. Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400-1600* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988). For an account of travel as reflexivity see Michael T. Ryan, "Assimilating New Worlds in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol 23, (1981), pp. 519-38. See also, and more generally, the impressive, multi-volume work of Donald Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe* (Chicago: The University Press of Chicago, 1965).

2. See David G. White, *Myths of the Dog-Man* (Chicago and London: The University Press of Chicago, 1991). For a discussion of monsters in the European imagination more generally see Katherine Park and Lorraine Daston, "Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-Century France and England," *Past and Present*, vol 92, (1981), pp. 20-54. Also Lorraine Daston, "Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe," *Critical Inquiry*, vol 18, no. 1, (1991), pp. 93-124. And Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964). For a review of travel literature featuring monsters in the "Marvelous East" in particular see Rudolf Wittkower, "Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol 5, (1942), pp. 159-97.
3. See for example the introductory chapter on "Images of the World" in Glyndwr Williams and P. J. Marshall, *The Great Map of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1982), pp. 1-44. I follow Michel Foucault in seeing the exotic as epistemic; a relatively fixed cultural problematic operational in discursive activity. For a discussion see Stephen William Foster, "The Exotic as a Symbolic System," *Dialectical Anthropology*, vol 7, no. 1, (1982), pp. 21-30.
4. Pierre Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), p. 348. Also Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conception of the Orient* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).
5. See Jacques Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures* (Original edition, 1982), this edition, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) pp. 74 and 214. And D. E. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), p. 161.
6. Italo Calvino, "Cybernetics and Ghosts," *The Literature Machine* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1987), p. 17.
7. Daniel Defert, "The Collection of the World: Accounts of Voyages from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries," *Dialectical Anthropology*, vol 7, no. 1, (1982), pp. 11-22.
8. Benedict Anderson, "Census, Map, Museum," *Imagined Communities* (Chicago: The University Press of Chicago, 1990), p. 141.
9. Cited in James A. Boon, "Why Museums Make Me Sad," in Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (eds). *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (London and Washington: The Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), p. 266. See more generally Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).
10. See, accumulatively, the reviews of Buddhism as [Soulless], in anon., "Buddhism," *The Christian Express*, vol 12, no. 124, (1880), p. 8; [Quietist], in anon., "History of Chinese Philosophy. Lao-Tsu, Confucius, and Buddah," *Oriental Herald and Journal of General Literature*, vol 17, no. 54, (1828), p. 512; [Atheist], in anon., "Professor Max Müller on Missions," *The Kaffir Express: An English-Kaffir Journal*, vol 4, no. 42, (1874), p. 1; or as just [Incoherent], in anon., "Huc's Travels in Tartary: A Review of M. Huc's Souvenirs d'un Voyage dans la Tartarie le Thibet et le Chine," *The South African Church Magazine and Ecclesiastical*

- Review*, (n.s.), vol 1, (1853), p. 73. See also J. D. Mackin, *Religion in Many Lands* (Cape Town: The African Bookman, 1944), pp. 10-12.
11. anon., "Professor Max Müller on Missions," *The Kaffir Express: An English-Kaffir Journal*, vol 4, no. 42, [March 7] (1874), p. 1.
 12. F. Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop: Essays on the Science of Religion* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1867), pp. 220 and 224.
 13. A. F. K. [The Editor], "On Modernism and Modernists," *The Blythwood Review*, April, (1928), p. 47. And R. D. Clark, "President's Address," *Report of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science, Natal, 1907* (Cape Town: South African Association for the Advancement of Science, 1908), p. 138. For varying interpretations of Olive Schreiner's religious dissent see [Agnosticism], D. L. Hobman, *Olive Schreiner: Her Friends and Times* (London: Watts and Co., 1955); [No Religion], Johannes Meintjies, *Olive Schreiner: Portrait of a South African Woman* (Johannesburg: Hugh Kewartland, 1965); [Free Thinker], Gertrude Millin *The Night is Long* (London: Faber and Faber, 1941); and [Universal Idealist], Richard Rive, "Olive Schreiner (1855-1920): A Biographical and Critical Study," Ph. D. thesis, University of Oxford, 1974.
 14. Philip A. Mellor, "Protestant Buddhism? The Cultural Translation of Buddhism in England," *Religion*, vol 21, (1991), p. 73. And Thomas A. Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844 to 1912: Victorian Culture and the Limits of Dissent* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992). The term "Protestant Buddhism" was first coined by Gananath Obeyesekere in an article entitled "Religious Symbolism and Political Change in Ceylon," *Modern Ceylon Studies*, vol 1, (1970), pp. 46-63. Heinz Bechert's phrase was first introduced by that writer in 1962 and later used in the three volumes of his 1966 work, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft*.
 15. Thomas William Rhys Davids, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion, as illustrated by some points in the History of Indian Buddhism* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1881), p. 184. And anon., "Superstitions - Civilized and Other," *The Christian Express*, vol 29, no. 348, ([August 1] (1899), p. 117.
 16. See Thomas A. Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844 to 1912: Victorian Culture and the Limits of Dissent* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992). Also Christopher Clausen, "Victorian Buddhism and the Origins of Comparative Religion," *Religion*, vol 5, no. 1, (1975). And Philip C. Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
 17. C. Louis Leipoldt, *Uit Drie Werelddele: Gedigte van C. Louis Leipoldt* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1934), p. 76. For a life of Ferdinand de Lesseps see Charles Beatty, *De Lesseps of Suez: The Man and His Times* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956).
 18. Boies Penrose, *Travel and Discovery in the Renaissance, 1420-1620* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952).

Notes to Chapter One

1. See anon., "Shipwreck off the Cape of Agulhas," *Cape Monthly Magazine*, (n.s.), vol 1, no. 1, (1857), pp. 31-41 and vol 1, no. 2, (1857), pp. 104-20. For the original French narrative see Gui Tachard, *A Relation of the Voyage to Siam Performed by Six Jesuits, Sent by the French King to the Indies and China in the Year 1685* (Original edition, 1686), this edition, (London: J. Robinson and A. Churchill, 1688). That Cape colonists were aware of Tachard's narrative is clear from Colonial records. In a letter dated 26 April 1688, for example, Simon van der Stel wrote that he had deported the Silesian apothecarist Hendrik Claudius, who had recently returned from China and Japan, because the latter had "communicated [to the Jesuits] everything about the colony and our inland expeditions, and perhaps more besides than we know of" in Tachard's "book lately published regarding their Siamese voyage." See H. C. V. Leibrandt, *Precis of the Cape Archives, Cape of Good Hope (Colony) Archives: Journals, 1684-1687*, MS LM10, 26 April 1688), Cape Archives Library. A contemporary analysis of these events, from the perspective of an historical account of relations between Cape colonists and the Khoi in the region, appears in Paul David Valentine, "The Cape of Good Hope and the World in the 1680s - What we can learn from the shipwreck of the Nossa Senhora dos Milagros at the Cape Of Agulhus, 16 April 1686," B. A. (Hons.) thesis, University of Cape Town, 1985.
2. anon., "Shipwreck off the Cape of Agulhas," *Cape Monthly Magazine*, (n.s.), vol 1, no. 2, (1857), p. 107.
3. In a letter from the King of Siam published in John Bowring's *The Kingdom and People of Siam* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey and Co., 1856), the ambassador is named as Kosa Pal, the younger brother of Cha Phya Phra Khlang. Bowring's book was available to readers at the Cape, in the South African Library, the following year. For a review see *Cape Monthly Magazine*, vol 2, no. 8 (n.s.), (1857), pp. 119-20. While both Leibrandt's manuscripts and Tachard's narrative refer to the clergymen as mandarins, the promise that they were Buddhists is noted by the Buddhologist Eugene Burnouf. See his published assertion in *The Science of Religions*, translated by Julie Liebe, (London: Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey and Co., 1888), pp. 87-88. For more recent detailed accounts of seventeenth-century relations between Portugal and Siam, as well as subsequent relations between Siam and British and French traders see John Anderson, *English Intercourse with Siam in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trubner, 1890) and Adrien Launay, *Histoire de la mission du Siam, documents historique* (Paris: Tequi, 1920), 2 vols.
4. The first French embassy to Siam, in 1685, consisted of no less than six Catholic Jesuits. Sent to Asia by Louis XIV in order to undertake astronomical observations in China, the Jesuits included Tachard, De Fontenay, Gerbillon, Lecompte, Bouvet, and Visdelou. The six were joined by Le Vachet and De Chailas, both of whom were sent as missionaries to Siam by the Marquis de Louvoy, President of the Royal Academy for Improving the Arts and Sciences, Minister of the Affairs of War, Overseer of the King's Buildings and Secretary to the State.

5. Cited in Edward Strangman, *Early French Callers at the Cape* (Cape Town: Juta, 1936), p. 106.
6. Olfert Dapper, "Kaffraria of Lant der Kaffers, Anders Hottentots Genaemt," *Naukerige Beschryvinge Der Afrikaensche Gewesten Van Egypten, Barbaryen, Libyen, Biledulgerid, Negroslant, Guinea, Ethiopien, Abyssinie* (Amsterdam: Jacob van Meur, 1668). In this respect his observations were markedly different from those of John Nieuhoff, Secretary to the Dutch Ambassador on the first Dutch East India Company tribute mission to the Ch'ing court in 1655. The latter, arriving at the Cape a decade before Dapper, in 1653, noted, as Sir Thomas Herbert had done a quarter century earlier, that while the men were undeniably "semi-eunuchs" and the women had practiced excision, "through custom or imitation rather than religion," the Khoi did know of the existence of a Supreme Being. They also had knowledge of the devil whom, they intimated, lived under the ground. Remarkably, argued Nieuhoff, the Khoi even possessed an understanding of the resurrection, concerning which, "they believe that those who die near the Cape will rise again behind the mountains." See Thomas Herbert, *Some Years Travel into Africa and Asia the Great, Especially Describing the Famous Empires of Persia and Industani, as also Divers Kingdoms in the Oriental Indies* (Original edition, 1634), this edition, (London: Everington, Basset, Wright and Chiswell, 1677), pp. 17-18. And John Nieuhoff, *Het Gezentschap der Neerlandsche Oost-Indische Compagnie aan den Grooten Tartarischen Cham, den tegenwoord-Keizer van China* (Original edition, 1665), this edition, (London: A. and J. Churchill, 1682), vol 2, p. 188.
7. John Nieuhoff, Secretary to the Ambassador on the first Dutch East India Company tribute mission to the Ch'ing court, between 1655 and 1657, wrote of Formosan healing rituals: "female priests ascend the top of their Temples, where they expose themselves quite Naked, and wash their Bodies in the sight of the People ... and if any of the Natives lay sick, past all hope of recovery, they used to tie a Rope about his neck, and so pull him up and let him down again, till they had cured his distemper by a certain death." See John Nieuhoff, *Het Gezentschap der Neerlandsche Oost-Indische Compagnie aan den Grooten Tartarischen Cham, den tegenwoord-Keizer van China*, (Original edition, 1665), this edition, (London: A. and J. Churchill, 1682).
8. Dapper's descriptions of the Khoi was based on Friedrich Wrede's account. Later to become Governor of Mauritius in 1665, Wrede's *Compendium* of 1663, given to the second Cape Commander, Zacharius Wagenaer, and dedicated to the seventeen, was, after Thomas Herbert's, one of the first known vocabularies of the Khoi language. Abraham Bogaert, the well known authority on the Khoi who had actually visited the Cape on numerous occasions, for example, used Dapper's writings almost exclusively for his description even though in a more convincing position to disclaim them. For a discussion of George Psalmanazaar see Robert Needham, *Exemplars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 75-116. For an account of the imagination as precursor to exploration see John L. Allen, "Lands of Myth, Waters of Wonder: The Place of the Imagination in the History of Geographical Exploration," in David Lowenthal and Martyn J. Bowden (eds.), *Geographies of the Mind: Essays in Historical Geography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 43 ff.

9. The second Commander of the Cape, Zacharias Wagenaer before taking up his post in southern Africa, had travelled to Tonquin in 1651 as secretary to Willem Verstegen's mission. On his return to Batavia he had stopped at Formosa (that had been occupied by the Dutch in 1640) and two years later, in 1653, the same year as Nieuhoff had landed at the Cape, undertook the first of two failed diplomatic missions to China in order to secure Dutch East India trading rights from the Manchu regent - the mission described in Nieuhoff's work. In 1656 Wagenaer went to Japan, and returned there in 1658, where he was given an audience with the Emperor, this time succeeding in securing favorable trade conditions for the Company in Nagasaki. See J. Hoge, "The Career of Zacharius Wagner," *Africana Notes and News*, vol 13, (1958-1859), pp. 74-77. For accounts of Cape collections of Oriental artifacts see Francois Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien* (Amsterdam: Van Braam, 1726), vol 1, pp. 159 ff, and Carol F. Woodward, *Oriental Ceramics at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1795: An Account of the Porcelain Trade of the Dutch East India Company with Particular Reference to Ceramics with the VOC Monogram, the Cape Market and South African Collections* (Cape Town: A. A. Balkema, 1974), pp. 170-72.
10. F. C. Fenscham, "Die Boekery van Ds. Wilhelm van Gendt en Joachim von Dessin se Versameling," *Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library*, vol 38, (1983-1984), pp. 161-67. Also Von Manger and Kauffman, *Catalogue of the Dessinian Collection in the Public Library of Cape Town* (Cape of Good Hope, 1821).
11. See S. Arasaratnam, "Reverend Phillipus Baldaeus - His Pastoral Work in Ceylon 1656-1665," *The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies*, vol 3, no. 1, (1960), pp. 27-37. Also Phillipus Baldaeus, *Naauwkeurige Berschrijvinge van Malabar en Choromandel en het Machtige Eyland Ceylon vol 1*, (Amsterdam: Jacob van Meur, 1672), p. 150. For references of Dutch attempts to establish Protestantism in Ceylon see Hendrik Zwaardecroon, *Memoir of Hedrik Zwaardecroon, Commandeur of Jaffnaputnam and later Governor General of Nederlands Indie for the Guidance of the Council of Jaffnaputnam during his Absence at the Coast of Malabar*, translated by Sophia Peters, (Colombo: Government Printer, 1911), pp. 51 ff.
12. Joris van Spilbergen, *t' Historiael Journael van thyme ghepasseert is van wegghen dry schepen ghenamt den Ram, Schaep ende het Lam ghevaren uit Zeelandt vander Staadt Camp vere naer d'Oost-indien onder t'beliyt van Joris van Spilbergen naar Ceylon, Atjeh en Batam, 1601-1604* (Original edition, 1617), this edition, (Amsterdam: Joost Hartgers, 1652).
13. Francois Valentijn, *Oud and Nieuw Oost-Indien* (Amsterdam: Van Braam, 1726), vol 5, book 8, p. 369.
14. On the power of analogy see also Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970).
15. Thomas Herbert, *Some Years Travel into Africa and Asia the Great, Especially Describing the Famous Empires of Persia and Industani, as also Divers Kingdoms in the Oriental Indies* (Original edition, 1634), this edition, (London: Everington, Basset, Wright and Chiswell, 1677), pp. 341-43.

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17. Francois Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History*, translated by Janet Lloyd, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 260 ff. Also Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970).
18. James Holman, *A Voyage Round the World Including Travels in Africa, Asia, Australasia and America from 1827-1832* (London: Elder and Cornhill, 1834), vol 3, p. 262. See also, anon., "Colonial Intelligence," *Oriental Herald and Colonial Review*, vol 1, (1824), p. 362.
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Notes to Part Two

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Notes to Chapter Four

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77. See Gavin Harrison, "Confronting Apartheid with Compassion," *Karuna: A Journal of Buddhist Meditation*, vol 5, no. 3, (1988), pp. 11-17. Also Gavin Harrison to Karma Samten Phuntsok, 2 September, 1986, Private papers of Karma Samten Phuntsok.

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Notes to Chapter Six

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3. Interviews with Molly van Loon, 1 February, 1992; Karma Rigdor Wang, 14 July, 1992; and Karma Sonam Lodo, 15 July, 1992.
4. The Editor, "Buddhist Retreat Centre, Ixopo," *Middle Way*, vol 58, no. 1, (1983), p. 68. And interview with Karma Sonam Lodo, 15 July, 1992. Also, The Editor, "A Time and Place to be Generous," *The Buddhist Retreat Center Newsletter*, January (1985). And Louis van Loon, "Some Unusual Psychokinetic Phenomena Associated with the Recovery of Lost Objects," in John Poynton (ed.), *Parapsychology in South Africa* (Johannesburg: South African Association for Psychical Research, 1975), pp. 51-55.
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11. R. Wheeler, "Ajahn Sumedho Interviewed," *Middle Way*, vol 58, no. 4, (1984), p. 6.
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13. Keri Swift, "Two Hours with Louis van Loon: A Buddhist Study Programme at UCT," *Argus*, 18 May, (1979). And interview with Molly van Loon, 1 February, 1992.

14. Louis H. van Loon. "Is it Wrong for a Buddhist to Marry Outside his Belief," *Sunday Tribune*, 19 October, 1975).

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19. Interview with Karma Sonam Lodo, 15 July, 1992.

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65. Katrin Auf der Heyde. "About our Role in a New South Africa," undated *Dharma Center Newsletter*. Also, interview with Alison Smith, 1 June, (1992).
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74. David L. Preston, *The Social Organization of Zen Practice: Constructing Transcultural Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 100 ff.
75. Martin Southwold, *Buddhism in Life. The Anthropological Study of Religion and the Sinhalese Practice of Buddhism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), p. 163. Also, interview with Poep In, 6 July 1992.
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Notes to the Epilogue

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2. Sheila Fugard's assertion that South Africans are a nation of "castaways" who have always known shipwreck is an appealing one, especially in light of observations in her novel of the same name that Buddhists were implicated in this history of shipwreck. For a discussion of that analysis see Rosemary Gray. "Sheila Fugard's *The Castaways*: Myth and Psychic Survival," *Commonwealth: Essays and Studies*, vol 10, no. 1, (1987), pp. 41-48. See also anon, "Sheila Fugard: *The Castaways*," in Sarah Christie, Geoffrey Hutchings and Don MacLennan (eds.), *Perspectives on South African Fiction* (Cape Town: A. D. Donker, 1980), pp. 164-73. See also Mircea Eliade. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of Eternal Return* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959).
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5. W. Bosman, *The Romance of Poverty* (Durban: Robinson and Co., 1940). Also Gerald Monsman, *Olive Schreiner's Fiction: Landscape and Power* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1991), pp. 101-102. And Richard Moore Rive, "Olive Schreiner, 1855-1920: A Biographical and Critical Study," PhD. thesis, University of Oxford, 1974, pp. 133-34.
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7. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: The Noonday Press, 1977), p. 68.
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9. See Ivan Strenski, "Levi-Strauss and the Buddhists," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol 22, (1980), pp. 3-22, reprinted in Ivan Strenski, *Religion and Relation: Method, Application and Moral Location* (London: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 110-131. And Octavio Paz, *Claude Levi-Strauss: An Introduction* (Original edition, 1967), this edition translated by J. S. Bernstein and Maxine Bernstein (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971), pp. 64-66 and pp. 91-101, especially pp. 33-34 and pp. 91-92. Andre Brink's remarks are included in an interview with the author, 20 May, 1992.
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